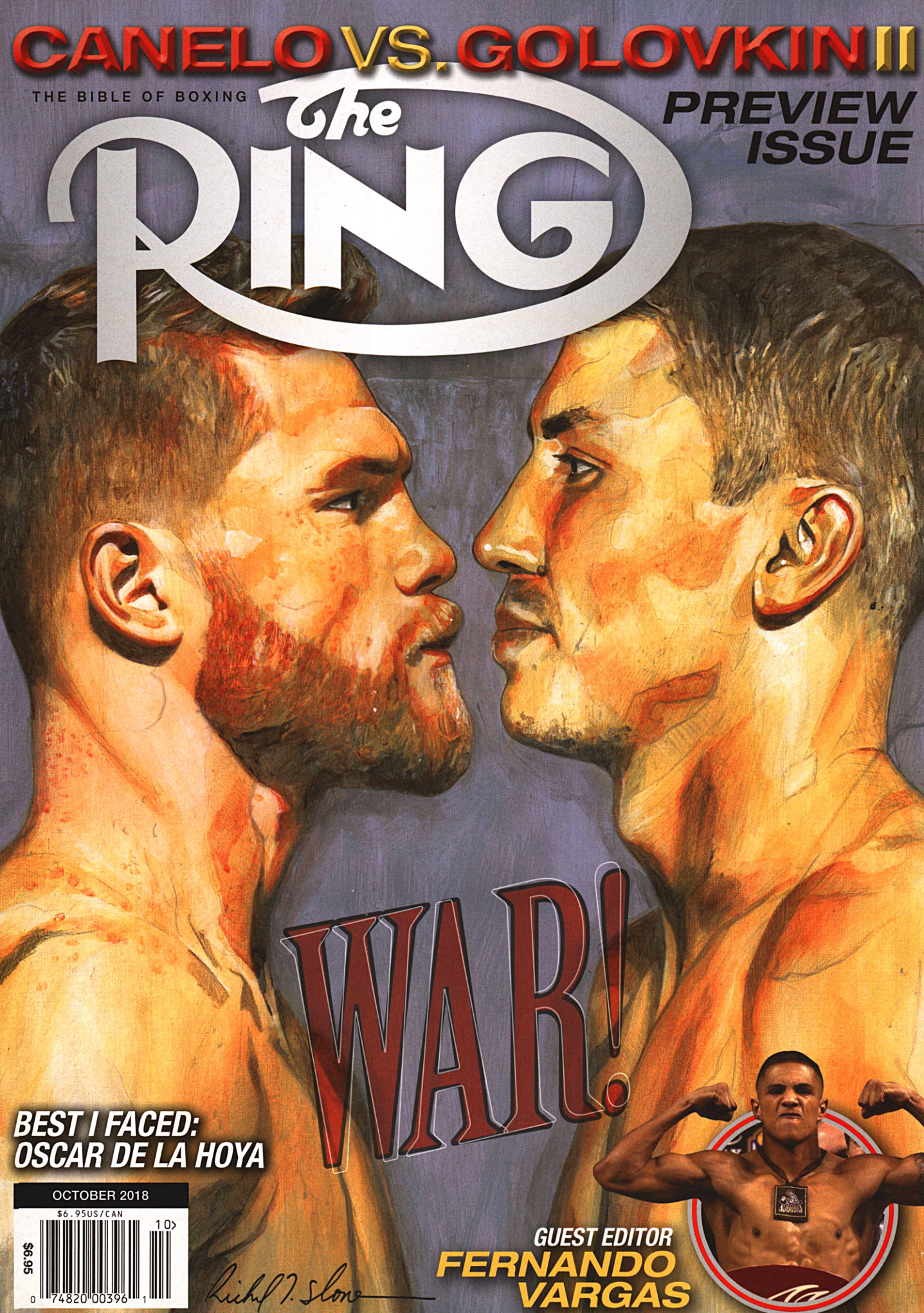
CANELO VS. GOLOVKIN II

THE BIBLE OF BOXING

The RING

PREVIEW ISSUE



WAR!

BEST I FACED: OSCAR DE LA HOYA

GUEST EDITOR
FERNANDO VARGAS

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CANELO-GOLOVKIN II PREVIEW

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Neither Team Canelo nor Team GGG would admit defeat after their controversial draw last September. The middleweight rivals will look to settle the score one year later.

ETHAN MILLER

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OPENING SHOT

If Jaime Munguia thought his mandatory title defense against Liam Smith would be as easy as his 154-pound belt-winning stoppage of Sadam Ali in December, he was misguided. The rugged English veteran provided a much-needed reality check by absorbing the 21-year-old Mexican's best shots for 12 hard rounds on July 21 in Las Vegas.

JOHN LOCHER

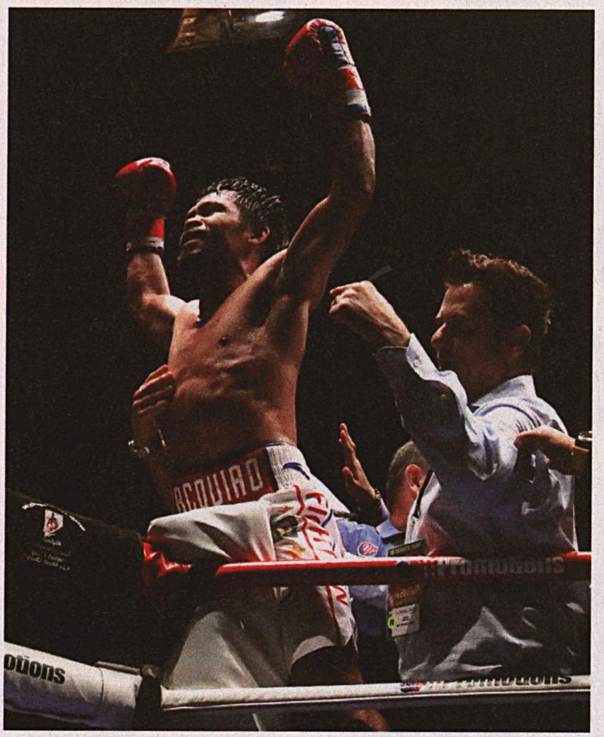
TAKE A BOW

Manny Pacquiao's biggest decision – and the right one – is to retire. No need for more highlights of a great career. There's nothing more for him in boxing; he needs to save his health and damage to his brain. Walk away and be happy and secure in your boxing legacy. Time to enjoy your family.

Gilbert B. Battung
San Ramon, California

PROOF IS IN THE PACMAN

One thing I really love observing about certain boxers is their resiliency. Floyd Mayweather would handle his moments of adversity and bring a fight to the finish line in his favor. Juan Manuel Marquez was knocked down so many times in his career, and it was always scary to see that you could never make him stay down; he always got more dangerous after being knocked down. We can't forget about Diego Corrales' (RIP) awesome comeback against Jose Luis Castillo. I think how these fighters handled their emotions took them a long way.



Manny Pacquiao still surprises a lot of us. I feel that some refused to accept his resiliency after he was knocked out cold by Marquez. How many fights does a man have to fight to prove himself to certain boxing fans?

Congrats to Pacman. He reminds me so much of Roberto Duran, but I hope he at least knows when to hang up his gloves.

Errol Ian Ave Acosta
Okinawa, Japan

ETHICAL DILEMMA

Please search your heart. Many of my generation (1940s) believe that The Ring is the "guardian" of boxing. Yet again: Pro women boxers risk anatomical child-bearing/feeding damage. There are men who enjoy watching their womenfolk beating each other up. I cannot watch it. CAN YOU? (If so, we must realize that this is for "nasty" men.) Are you one? Four BIG pro women's boxing pages!! This gives credibility to it. The Ring approves. Just ignoring it would be another way – do not publish it.

David Williamson
Poole, Dorset, U.K.

TWEET OF THE MONTH

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Ring does indeed approve. You are by no means the only person who is uncomfortable watching women box, but consider this: Those of us who work around this sport are constantly responding to friends, relatives and strangers who are horrified that MEN still box. To them, boxing is barbaric and they'd rather do anything besides watch it. There is no real evidence for a lot of the reproductive "risks" specifically cited for female boxers, but all fighters face the very real threat of harm or even death. Whatever the reasons there are for stepping into the ring – glory, mastery of a craft, self-defense, confidence, money – women and men have them, and they either put in the same grueling hours of disciplined training to win or they get their butts kicked. And then they either get up and try again or they don't. These feats of bravery, will and skill inspire us.

CORRECTION: In Thomas Hauser's Jabs and Straight Writes column entitled "Two Minutes or Three" (September 2018), an editing error resulted in the following sentence: "World Boxing Council president Mauricio Sulaiman has proclaimed that the WBC will 'never' sanction three-minute rounds for women's bouts that are more than 10 rounds in duration." The sentence should have said that Sulaiman "proclaimed that the WBC will 'never' sanction three-minute rounds for women or women's bouts that are more than 10 rounds in duration."

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Pictured left to right: Damon Allen Jr., Jessie Vargas, Fernando Vargas

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RINGSIDE BY FERNANDO VARGAS

GRUDGE MASTER

ANGER WORKED FOR ME, BUT I WAS NEVER RECKLESS

People keep asking me if the hate is real between Canelo Alvarez and Gennady Golovkin, like I'm an expert on grudge matches. They think I hated everyone that I fought or that I went into all of my fights pissed off.

I wasn't mad. I was psyched. I was pumped up. I wasn't going to walk to the ring smiling, because that wasn't me. I was an athletic street kid who was blessed by God to have found a boxing gym in the La Colonia section of Oxnard, California. I learned how to box, I took to the sport, but I kept the street mentality. Going into a boxing match, I had the same mindset I had going into a street fight, even as I was entering the ring, but once the bell rang I was a professional boxer – calm and collected. I never forgot what my trainer, Eduardo Garcia, always told me: intelligence first, then bravery.

It's true, I carried some grudges into the ring. You saw that with Oscar De La Hoya, Raul Marquez and my last fight, against Ricardo Mayorga. But I respected them.

When I fought Oscar, I didn't go in there all stupid. I knew he was a good technician and could punch, too. I was in there trying to hurt him, but it was smart pressure. I didn't lose that fight because I couldn't control my emotions; I just got caught at the end of the 10th round.

I could be mad as hell right before a fight and then box a masterpiece. The night I beat Marquez, I don't think anybody could have beaten me. I peaked that night, as a boxer and an athlete, and I never felt like that again. But I shoved him at the weigh-in because he gave me a De La Hoya T-shirt. He had trained at Oscar's gym in Big Bear (California) and was trying to get in my head. I said, "OK, I'm gonna hold this for you, because you're gonna need it to wipe up all the blood from your cuts after I whup your ass." I said that because I felt disrespected.

If you talk shit to me, I'm gonna talk shit back, like I did with Mayorga. I got him pissed off and he tried to backhand me at the press conference, but he didn't catch me. I've been in too many street fights. I'm ready for that shit.

But I don't hate these guys anymore. I was still a kid, and when you fight somebody, you're not supposed to like them. But I respected them. That's why I didn't go in there reckless.

The only fight that I lost my head was against Ross Thompson, because he sucker punched me at the press conference and that was a bitch move. He came at me all loud and crazy, telling me I'm a bum, I'm overrated – trying to intimidate me. I knocked him off the podium with a check hook, but I wasn't done with him. I went into that fight looking for the knockout – no jabs, all power punches. He made it a street fight at the press conference, I made a street fight in the ring, and I spat on him after I dropped him the third time. I got fined 50 grand for doing that. It was the best money I ever spent. I do not apologize for that.

The emotion and intensity I had during my career didn't hurt me. It helped motivate me and it made me the attraction that I was. I think people respected that I was real about my feelings. It made me stand out.

Back to Canelo-Golovkin. The hate is real. They're definitely going to go at it this time. Golovkin will apply harder pressure and Canelo will want to fight more this time around; he'll be more of a boxer-puncher instead of a defensive boxer.

But don't expect these guys to get crazy or do anything stupid. I've never seen either lose his head in the ring. They can be pissed off, but they control their anger. Canelo and Golovkin are on top of their game, and in this case, I think the hate is going to make for a better fight. This time, when one gets the other in trouble, he's going to go for it.

Fernando Vargas is a former two-time junior middleweight titleholder. He now oversees the Fernando Vargas Fighting Foundation, a nonprofit organization for kids in North Las Vegas, which you can find at facebook.com/FernandoVargasFightingFoundation, or call at 702-910-4810.

ALEKSANDR USYK

The past 30 days have featured performances that were valiant (Lenny Zappavigna's bloody losing effort against Alex Saucedo) and inspirational (Manny Pacquiao's age-defying stoppage of Lucas Matthysse), but Aleksandr Usyk was the runaway choice for Fighter of the Month.

The former amateur star's one-sided unanimous decision over Murat Gassiev in the World Boxing Super Series cruiserweight final is the boxing clinic of the year so far, and the definition of a "master class."

Usyk also vaulted himself into the pound-for-pound top five by unifying all four major sanctioning organization belts, winning the vacant Ring title and once again defeating a quality rival in that opponent's home region; Usyk outpointed Krzysztof Glowacki in Poland, Mairis Briedis in Latvia and, finally, Gassiev in Russia to earn undisputed champion status in just 15 pro bouts.

Now there's talk of a big-money showdown with Tony Bellew, a bout that could take place slightly over the cruiserweight limit or at 200 pounds with all the marbles on the line. Regardless, it won't be long before Usyk takes aim at the heavyweight titleholders, and while the odds will be against the Ukrainian southpaw, few will count him out.

ADVANCED DEGREES

Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their more contemporary counterparts. Ahead of September's grudge match, regular contributor Gregg Morgan linked Stanley Ketchel, who won the middleweight title in 1907 and is considered by many to be the greatest 160-pound champion in history, to Gennady Golovkin in 11 steps ... which means a dozen would link him to Canelo as well:

Stanley Ketchel fought

Sam Langford, who fought

Brad Simmons, who fought

Ham Pounder, who fought

Archie Moore, who fought

Muhammad Ali, who fought

Trevor Berbick, who fought

Iran Barkley, who fought

Darrin Van Horn, who fought

Gianfranco Rosi, who fought

Sylvain Gomis, who fought

Gennady Golovkin

NEW FACES

DEVIN HANEY

BY ANSON WAINWRIGHT

In May, lightweight prospect Devin Haney put down a marker when he forced former contender Mason Menard to call it a night at the conclusion of the ninth round in their main event on *ShoBox: The New Generation.*

The 19-year-old speedster took a huge step up in class, but it paid off; Haney seamlessly improved his unbeaten record (19-0, 13 knockouts) with a dominating performance.

"A lot of people were saying I shouldn't take the fight," Haney told The Ring. "Me and my dad believed in my talent and skill, and I went in there and did what I was supposed to do. On paper it was a huge step up, but I was sparring world champions in the gym and knew that I was ready."

Haney has sparred with the likes of Jorge Linares, Shawn Porter and his idol, Floyd Mayweather Jr. – with whom he went six rounds at five minutes apiece – and those experiences proved to be invaluable.

"I knew Mason Menard had never seen a Devin Haney before, and I knew Devin had seen a Mason Menard before," Haney's father, William, who doubles up as his manager and trainer, told The Ring. "No disrespect to Mason Menard, but we just knew we had time to prepare for his style and we knew he wouldn't be able to prepare for Devin Haney – the footwork, the agility, the reflexes, all those things."

The manner of victory impressed former Ring editor-in-chief Steve Farhood, who now serves as an on-air analyst for ShoBox and called Haney's most recent fight.

"Simply put, Haney is one of the most advanced and impressive prospects I've seen in the last few years," said Farhood. "The fact that I am saying that about a teenager speaks volumes about his potential. He could go very, very far in this game.

"What separates Haney is his comfort in the ring, his textbook technique and his superior balance. He boxed beautifully – and perhaps just as importantly, consistently – against Menard in what was a big step up in class.

"He was impressive outside the ring as well. I was not necessarily expecting a humble young man after seeing Haney driving a Rolls and flashing the Benjamins, a la Money Mayweather. Moreover, he called Adrien Broner out a couple of years ago. But he was charming and appreciative of the opportunity he had been given to shine on national TV."

With so much upside, Farhood found it tough to pick out any significant flaws.

"Perhaps he could flatten his feet and generate more power in his punches, but that's about it."

Haney was born in San Francisco, but his parents separated when he was born and he moved to Las Vegas with his father.

"He was fighting from 3, 4, 5 years old; he was always a very physical kid," said William. "One day he had went to school and he had got into an altercation, and I had a meeting with the principal and he wanted to know what was going on at home, because Devin was using violence to solve a problem. I said, 'Devin has always been like that.'

"So after we got in the car, and I said, 'Dev, do you want to go to a gym? Because you always seem to want to punch or duck a punch or hit someone and make them chase you.' And he said, 'Yeah, for sure.' And he went to a gym, and on the very first day he was sparring with a kid who had Velcro shoes, and Devin knocked him out of his shoes. I said, 'Wow.' The trainer (former light heavyweight contender) Derrick Harmon said, 'Your son is a natural.' Devin liked it, and the rest is history."

They later visited the Mayweather Boxing Club, and Haney's new passion grew stronger.

"He sees Floyd, it's like a kid seeing Michael Jordan. And you see him work out – you can watch him, touch him and talk to him," said Haney Sr. "That really inspired him, kind of lit a fire in terms of being a boxer from a young age."

As an amateur, Haney won seven national junior titles. He was No. 1 in the U.S. for three years in a row: at 119, 125 and 132 pounds.

However, when the Olympic committee decided to raise the age limit from 17 to 19 after removing headgear, it ended Haney's Olympic dream.

He decided to turn pro at just 17 – after going 130-8 in the unpaid ranks – but was unable to fight in the U.S. and instead went to Mexico, where he won his first four fights before getting special dispensation from the Nevada Athletic Commission to box as a 17-year-old on the undercard of Manny Pacquiao-Tim Bradley III in April 2016.

Since then, he has kept very active but decided to remain a free agent, not aligning himself with any of the big power brokers of the sport. Instead, he has his own company called Devin Haney Promotions.

"We're doing a great job," said William. "We have the attention of the world, the attention of a major network in Showtime, which is showcasing our talents."

"I think I'm very close to a title shot. I've been saying I'm willing to go to 130 if I don't get a title shot. I want to be a multi-division world champion. I want to go down with the greats; I want my name to be mentioned with them."

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.,

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

RONDA ROUSEY REWRITES THE SCRIPT

Ronda Rousey was co-featured on a fight card at Madison Square Garden on Saturday night, July 7. But it wasn't what the combat sports world once envisioned it would be. Instead, the woman who was honored at the 2015 ESPY Awards as "Best Fighter" of the year wrestled a former plus-model named Nia Jax on the WWE Live SummerSlam Heatwave Tour.

Three years ago, Rousey was the UFC 135-pound women's champion. She'd been featured in mainstream publications ranging from Time magazine to The New Yorker. Moviegoers had seen her in *Entourage* and *The Expendables 3*. Sports Illustrated, which featured Rousey in its annual swimsuit issue, called her the most dominant athlete in the world. She had an almost biological symbiosis with the spotlight and knew what to do when it was shining on her. Almost singlehandedly, she forced the UFC to acknowledge and promote women's MMA.

Then came the fall. It turned out that Rousey, who won multiple gold medals as an amateur judoka and bronze at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, couldn't take a punch (or a kick). She was knocked out by Holly Holm in the second round of their fight in Melbourne in November 2015. Thirteen months later, it took Amanda Nunes 48 seconds to accomplish the same end.

Cover-girl looks don't help once the bell rings.

Rousey, now 31 years old, has since found greener pastures, or at least safer waters. Earlier this year, she joined WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) as an active combatant.

The scene at Madison Square Garden on July 7 was typical of big WWE events. There was a crowd of roughly 15,000, most of whom were in their seats when the first match began at 7:30 p.m. Jeans were the most common attire. There wasn't a tie in sight. It was a young crowd. Many in attendance were parents with grade school-age children in tow. At 6 feet 11 inches tall, New York Knicks center Enes Kanter was the most visible celebrity in the audience. The action was magnified by four large video screens that hang from the rafters and also by another large screen that WWE erected at one end of the arena. Loud music blared between fights.

There were nine bouts, including multiple tag-team and championship encounters, with very little downtime in between. All of the matches pitted heroes against villains ("babyfaces" versus "heels" in wrestling parlance).

Fans go to WWE events knowing that they'll get what they want. It's understood that there will be back-and-forth action in every bout. No tag-team match ends until each of the grapplers has seen at least some combat. The matches are scripted but not danger-free. The stunts require flexibilty, agility, acrobatic skill and strength. If the timing is wrong, particularly with a body slam or leap from a turnbuckle, someone can get hurt.

Many of the male combatants had bodybuilder physiques, although some looked as though they've been drinking a lot of beer lately.

There's a high level of audience participation at WWE events. Fans count punches aloud as they land, urge fighters to employ various strategies and wave cell phones on cue in a suddenly darkened arena. On occasion, they chant in unison, "This is awesome."

Rousey faced off against Jax in the eighth match of the evening.

Traditionally, professional wrestling was an end-of-the-line destination for former boxers who were no longer competitive in a boxing ring and were having trouble making ends meet.

In 1956, Joe Louis went on tour as a professional wrestler. The script for his matches was predictable. Louis was pitted against a villainous opponent who would engage in dirty tactics until rendered unconscious by The Brown Bomber's famed right hand. However, his wrestling career came to an abrupt end soon after it began when a 320-pound opponent named Rocky Lee timed a leap poorly and landed on Louis's chest, breaking two of his ribs and bruising the muscles around his heart.

Thereafter, Louis refereed occasional wrestling matches until 1972, when poor health intervened. That mirrored the journey Jack Dempsey traveled, beginning in

1931 when he refereed a wrestling match between Jim O'Dowd (good guy) and Billy Edwards (villain). Edwards had the temerity to punch Dempsey, and The Manassa Mauler promptly knocked the heel unconscious. Dempsey continued to referee wrestling matches into his seventh decade when Walter "Killer" Kowalski accidentally kicked him in the stomach and sent him (for real) to the hospital.

Muhammad Ali was a "special guest referee" when Hulk Hogan and Mr. T battled Paul Orndorff and Rowdy Roddy Piper in WrestleMania I at Madison Square Garden in 1985. Ali also squared off against Japanese wrestler Antonio Inoki in Tokyo in 1976. But that confrontation was unscripted and stultifyingly boring as Inoki crabwalked around the ring on his butt for 15 long rounds. Chuck Wepner was thrown out of the ring by Andre the Giant in an undercard bout that night.

More recently, Mike Tyson appeared as a "special outside enforcer" at WrestleMania XIV in 1998 and as a participant in a tag-team match on WWE Monday Night Raw in 2010. Floyd Mayweather was in the ring against Big Show at Wrestlemania XXIV in 2008.

But those were all part-time ventures by boxers, and most of them were in non-combat roles. Rousey is now both a combatant and a regular on the WWE circuit. In that regard, her role model is Brock Lesnar, who won an NCAA heavyweight wrestling championship while at the University of Minnesota, was featured in the main event on five UFC pay-per-view telecasts and has wrestled on and off for WWE for the past 16 years.

One of the keys to a wrestler's success is the skill level of the partners and opponents that he or she performs with. In Rousey's first WWE outing (Wrestlemania 34 in New Orleans on April 8 of this year), she was paired with veteran Kurt Angle. Together, they defeated the tag-team duo of Triple H (known outside the ring as Paul Michael Levesque) and Stephanie McMahon when Rousey applied her famed armbar to McMahon.

Angle, McMahon and Levesque are pros who go about their business exceedingly well. That said, Rousey surprised – and is continuing to surprise – a lot of people at WWE with how good she is.

A lot of hard work is involved in implementing a WWE script. Rousey is a natural. She has charisma. She has prodigious athletic gifts. And she plays to the crowd well.

"Are you nervous?" Ellen DeGeneres asked Rousey shortly before her WWE debut.

"I'm nervous, but not like Olympics nervous," Ronda answered. "The worst thing that can happen is that I'll look stupid."

As for Rousey vs. Jax at "the world's most famous arena" ... Jax (whose real name is Savelina Fanene) is a 34-year-old native of Australia who WWE lists as being 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighing 272 pounds (Wikipedia says she's two inches shorter and 32 pounds lighter). She has been on the WWE circuit since 2015 and has engaged in various feuds as both a babyface and heel.

Rousey is 5 feet 7 inches tall. When she fought on UFC cards, she weighed 135 pounds for a few hours before each weigh-in. She now weighs closer to 150.

Rousey and Jax did battle in a ring pitched on the hallowed ground where Muhammad Ali fought Joe Frazier for the first time. A villainess named Alexa Bliss and her sidekick (the not-quite-as-evil Mickie James) were guest referees. Rousey and Jax engaged in heated combat. But each time that Ronda was on the verge of a pin, Bliss and James conspired to deny her the victory. In one instance, James "slow counted." In another, James claimed she had hurt her shoulder (or was it her wrist?) and hadn't been able to slap the mat for the final count. Eventually, Rousey and Jax grew disgusted with both referees and knocked them out, after which they returned to fighting each other. Then a third referee (who was honorable) charged into the ring to supervise the rest of the match, which ended when Ronda submitted Nia with an armbar.

And everyone went home happy.

★★★★

There were times when David Haye conducted himself like a jerk. But his June 12 retirement statement was eloquent and poignant.

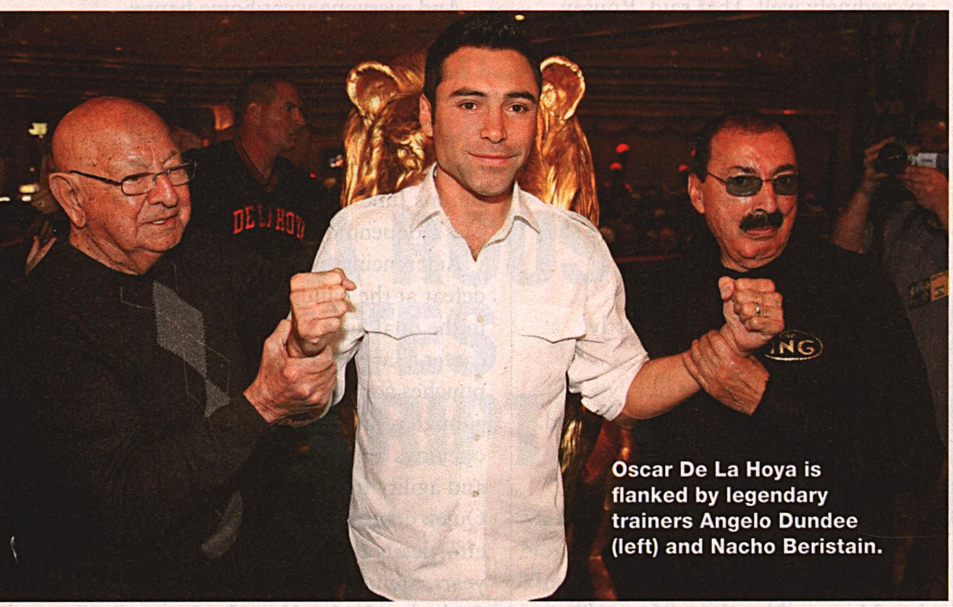
Referencing his May 5 knockout defeat at the hands of Tony Bellew in the final fight of his 15-year ring career, Haye acknowledged, "I saw punches coming but wasn't quick enough to avoid them. I created openings but lacked the speed and agility to capitalize on them. Quick counterattacks, the sort I've effortlessly thrown since my teenage years, are no longer in my armory. And when I take shots, they now shake me to my boots. The things I used to be able to do in the ring instinctively now exist only in my mind and in video clips of my old fights. My ego would have loved to have retired on a win. But deep down, I know my effort was the very best I had left to give. That underwhelming effort revealed the truth about my current abilities in a world-class boxing arena. The boxing gods have spoken."

Haye also had this bit of wisdom to offer: "If I could go back in time and give advice to my 21-year-old self, or anyone setting off on their own adventure, I would say this: Live in the moment. Don't only appreciate the good times once they become a memory."

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book – There Will Always Be Boxing – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.

BEST I FACED

BY ANSON WAINWRIGHT



Oscar De La Hoya is flanked by legendary trainers Angelo Dundee (left) and Nacho Beristain.

OSCAR DE LA HOYA

Oscar De La Hoya was boxing's brightest star during the 1990s-2000s. The fresh-faced East Los Angeles native won 10 world titles over six weight classes during the prime years of his Hall-of-Fame pro career.

His amateur career was also a brilliant success, which isn't too surprising given that he was born into a boxing family and took up the sport at 6 years old. His grandfather, father and older brother Joel all boxed to varying degrees.

De La Hoya won a slew of national amateur championships en route to earning a berth on the 1992 U.S Olympic team, and won America's only boxing gold medal at the Barcelona Games.

For all his accolades, it is that medal he most cherishes.

"Nobody can ever take that away," De La Hoya told The Ring. "I've won many world titles and I've fought the very best in the world, but the Olympic gold medal is by far my prize possession.

"(This is because of) the pressure I had going into (the gold medal fight, and I was) doing it for my mother – she had just passed a few months before."

He decided to make the transition to the professional ranks after going 223-5 as an amateur. His services were courted by Top Rank promoter Bob Arum, who quickly brokered a deal.

De La Hoya's heartthrob looks and movie star smile opened the door to corporate America, and he quickly became a popular figure.

"The Golden Boy" won the then-lightly regarded WBO 130-pound strap against Jimmi Bredahl in just his 12th fight and never looked back.

De La Hoya moved up to lightweight and won the WBO title, then added the IBF belt by demolishing Rafael Ruelas in two rounds. Wins over the likes of John John Molina (UD), Genaro Hernandez (TKO 6) and Jesse James Leija (TKO 2) proved to hardcore fans and media that the burgeoning star was for real. De La Hoya, who beat those four seasoned contenders in 1995, earned The Ring's Fighter of the Year award.

By the summer of 1996, he had moved up to junior welterweight and challenged the legendary Julio Cesar Chavez for the WBC 140-pound belt.

"It was a double-edged sword, to have to fight my hero and beat him the way I did," De La Hoya said of his four-round victory. "It was a sad moment in my life, but a happy moment."

Over the next two years, De La Hoya outpointed then-unbeaten (41-0) Miguel Angel Gonzalez in his final bout at 140 pounds, then moved to welterweight to edge past the supremely skilled Pernell Whitaker in a fight for the WBC belt and pound-for-pound supremacy. He defended his 147-pound title with a decision over wily veteran Hector Camacho and a stoppage of Chavez in a rematch.

"For the second fight, he came and fought," he said of the return bout with his boyhood idol. "(Chavez) actually wobbled me, but I didn't show it."

De La Hoya fought unbeaten welterweight standout Ike Quartey to a standstill in a thrilling encounter in February 1999. Both men were on the canvas in a frenzied sixth frame, only for De La Hoya to seal the victory with a final-round knockdown.

Later that year, De La Hoya collided with fellow welterweight titleholder and Puerto Rican star Felix Trinidad.

"I beat him the first eight, nine rounds, and then the last three rounds I boxed him," De La Hoya said. "In those times, when you boxed a little

they called it running; now if you box, they call it beautiful. (laughs) That's one fight I wish I would have had again."

His next big fight came against crosstown rival Shane Mosley. A second-half surge during a close and competitive fight saw Mosley win a split decision.

De La Hoya wasn't done with the sport, however, and stepped up to junior middleweight to widely outpoint rugged WBC beltholder Javier Castillejo. He then unified the WBC and WBA titles against Fernando Vargas in an exciting encounter, stopping his bitter rival in the penultimate round of their grudge match.

Mosley relieved him of his titles in controversial fashion, and De La Hoya once again moved up in weight. This time, Lady Luck favored him as he narrowly outpointed Felix Sturm to complete his goal of winning world titles in six weight classes.

That win set up a fight with Bernard Hopkins for the undisputed middleweight championship. De La Hoya boxed well and the fight was a close, tactical battle until Hopkins landed a debilitating body shot in the ninth round to bring proceedings to a close.

De La Hoya returned to junior middleweight and regained his WBC belt against villain Ricardo Mayorga before losing superfights to Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao.

Shortly afterward, he retired in December 2008 and was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility in 2014.

At one time, De La Hoya held the record for most pay-per-view revenue generated, totalling 13.85 million buys and grossing $680.6 million.

De La Hoya, now 45, lives in Los Angeles and runs Golden Boy Promotions, which he founded in 2002. Away from boxing, he enjoys playing golf and owns a stake in Major League Soccer team Houston Dynamo, among other investments.

He graciously took time to speak to The Ring about the best he fought in 10 key categories.

BEST JAB

IKE QUARTEY: By far, Ike Quartey. Not only was it powerful, it was very consistent.

BEST DEFENSE

PERNELL WHITAKER: It would have to be a coin flip between Pernell Whitaker and Mayweather. Both had different styles. Whitaker used his waist more and stood in front of you and was very slippery. Mayweather was more of a boxer that moved just a little bit more. The most difficult to hit was probably Whitaker.

BEST FOOTWORK

FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.: I think (Floyd) Mayweather used the ring really well. He had good footwork – that's what starts it all. The anticipation of knowing when you're going to attack was a big part of his defense, which made him very clever.

BEST HAND SPEED

SHANE MOSLEY: It was "Sugar" Shane Mosley in the first fight. He had amazing hand speed. With him it was just the speed behind his punches; even though you can see them coming, there were so many – and very accurate and great power. A fighter like Pacquiao, he's fast as well. He throws a lot of punches from different angles and you get hit because you don't know where they're coming from. With Mayweather, he's fast too, but his speed is more about timing. It's not like "Sugar" Shane Mosley with four- and five-punch combinations. Mayweather is more like you throw a jab and he'll counter it. That's his speed. I think Shane Mosley in his prime was the fastest fighter I've met.

STRONGEST

FERNANDO VARGAS: I would have to say Fernando Vargas. He was very big and strong. We all know what happened after that fight (Vargas tested positive for steroids), but he was very powerful. I was almost knocked out of the ropes in the first round. He was a strong son of a gun. His anger is what fueled him.

SMARTEST

FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.: I think the fact he knew how to anticipate my punches made him smart, made him win the fight.

BEST CHIN

JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ: I hit him with some good shots and he still wouldn't go down. He had one of the best chins in the world, ever. Very resilient. He still is my hero.

BEST PUNCHER

QUARTEY: His punches were like bricks; he hit me and it would sting me. Every punch he would hit me with, it would rattle me.

BEST BOXING SKILLS

WHITAKER: Whitaker had to be one of the most skillful fighters in any generation – the fact he could stay right in front of you and could still slip the punches. Whitaker wasn't a runner; he was just someone who stood right in front of you and knew how to slip. Whitaker knew how to knock you out, too. Punching power, skill, I.Q. – Whitaker had it all. He's probably one of the all-around best boxers I faced.

BEST OVERALL

MANNY PACQUIAO: I would have to say Pacquiao. I think his determination, his conditioning, his skill, his power, speed, footwork … he's one of the fighters I most appreciated. Mayweather-Pacquiao would have been a lot different (if they'd fought) in their primes. Pacquiao would have beat (Mayweather) easy, absolutely.

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

FIGHTS OF FANTASY

BY TOM GRAY

The first encounter had the ingredients to be the perfect prizefight. Two undefeated world titleholders with terrific skills and authentic knockout power colliding at the peak of their respective careers.

On September 18, 1999, the Mandalay Bay Events Center in Las Vegas hosted Oscar De La Hoya vs. Felix Trinidad. It was the most significant welterweight battle in almost 20 years and the boxing world anticipated something very special.

Oscar De La Hoya and Felix Trinidad were inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame the same year, 2014 (along with referee Richard Steele) – 15 years after their controversial, record-breaking fight.

OSCAR DE LA HOYA VS. FELIX TRINIDAD II

THREE EXPERTS – A FIGHTER, A TRAINER AND A MEDIA MEMBER – TELL YOU HOW A MYTHICAL MATCHUP WOULD PLAY OUT

And then the bell rang.

De La Hoya, the biggest star in world boxing, made the tactical decision to move and box. "The Golden Boy" created angles and utilized superior punch variety to keep the slow-footed Trinidad off balance and frustrated. It wasn't crowd-pleasing, but the strategy was working like a charm.

Through nine rounds, De La Hoya appeared to have built up a commanding lead. In fact, the East L.A. superstar was so convinced that the argument was over that he stopped fighting and used his feet to stay away from Trinidad. That decision was arguably the worst of De La Hoya's Hall-of-Fame career.

Despite registering very little damage, "Tito" Trinidad swept the championship rounds to claim a highly controversial majority decision. Team De La Hoya was incensed, but the result was in the books and the only thing that could settle matters was a rematch.

It never happened.

Both fighters went on to achieve more glory without each other. Trinidad moved north to junior middleweight, and by the time De La Hoya got there, he had jumped up again to middleweight. But what if Trinidad had stayed for one more fight at 154 pounds and the pair met in their first fight of 2001? Three boxing experts offer their take on the rematch that got away.

Tom Gray is Associate Editor for The Ring. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing

DE LA HOYA ★ TALE OF THE TAPE ★ TRINIDAD

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

DE LA HOYA		TRINIDAD
28	AGE	28
32-2 (26 KOS)	RECORD	39-0 (32 KOS)
81 PERCENT	KO PERCENTAGE	82 PERCENT
ORTHODOX	STANCE	ORTHODOX
5 FEET 10½ INCHES	HEIGHT	5 FEET 11 INCHES
73 INCHES	REACH	72½ INCHES

FIGHTER

FERNANDO VARGAS

FORMER TWO-TIME JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER

As much as I hated Oscar at the time, I thought he was a better boxer than Trinidad and I thought he was going to win at welterweight. He made the fight closer than what it needed to be, but I still thought he deserved the decision. If they would have fought a rematch at junior middleweight, Trinidad would have been stronger, because he struggled to make 147, but the footwork, boxing ability, ring generalship – that all still favored Oscar. And knowing how proud Oscar is, he'd have something to prove. The second time around, I don't think he would have been on his bicycle as much in the late rounds. He'd fight more, but he couldn't let his hands go the way he did against (Shane) Mosley late in their (first) fight, because Trinidad was a murderous puncher. Trinidad is very good at putting on pressure. He's just relentless. But Oscar didn't give Trinidad a chance to get set with his power in their first fight. Oscar probably struggled with the pressure, but not until the late rounds. I think he would be prepared for it in the rematch. He'd outbox Trinidad over the first half and stand his ground a little bit more late. De La Hoya would get the decision and it would be wider on the scorecards than the first fight.

Prediction: DE LA HOYA

TRAINER

RONNIE SHIELDS

TRAINER OF ERISLANDY LARA

Oscar was a good boxer; he threw good combinations, he knew when to get in and when to get out and he was really smart. I thought Pernell Whitaker beat him, but Oscar fought a really good fight. That was a learning curve for him, but I still think he lost to Trinidad. That fight happened at the right time, but even though Oscar fought well, he gave that fight away in the last couple of rounds. He was winning, but I don't know what made him think that he had the fight in the bag. You never know what the judges' scorecards are gonna say, and it was a lot closer than he thought it was. Trinidad always impressed me, because you could see he trained all the time. He was so big for a welterweight, and even though I think Pernell (Whitaker) would have beaten him a few years earlier, Trinidad would always have been tough. If Oscar and Trinidad had fought a rematch at 154 pounds, I think Trinidad would have won handily. Everyone knows Trinidad was having trouble making welterweight and he was so weak. He picked it up when he had to, but at junior middleweight I think he would have been too strong for De La Hoya. It would have been difficult to stop Oscar, so I think it goes the distance.

Prediction: TRINIDAD

MEDIA

JOHN EVANS

BOXING CORRESPONDENT FOR 32RED

In the first fight, De La Hoya tried to be too clever for his own good. Tito struggled against a guy who wasn't willing to meet fire with fire, and that allowed De La Hoya to get into a rhythm. Late in the fight, Trinidad adjusted and had a bit of success, but I still think Oscar deserved the decision. Both men were disappointing. Trinidad, however, was weight-drained at 147 pounds and when he moved up to 154, he got his power back and started hurting people again. And you can't overlook the fact that he moved to 154 as a very confident fighter. Trinidad had just beaten "The Golden Boy" and he believed that he deserved that decision. With Oscar, I think he reached his ceiling at 147. I know he beat Vargas at junior middleweight, but Vargas was damaged goods after Tito got to him. I think Oscar's move up to 154 was for the money and to set records. I still think his style gives Trinidad problems at junior middleweight and Oscar might even drop the more aggressive version of Tito in a firefight. Ultimately, though, Trinidad outlasts him, lands more thunder and runs away with the fight on points. De La Hoya wouldn't want to engage often, but he would have no choice, because Tito wouldn't be a diminished fighter at 154.

Prediction: TRINIDAD

Tale of the Tape stats as of March 1, 2001

RATINGS

Aleksandr Usyk taught the "master class of the year" (so far) over the course of 12 rounds against fellow cruiserweight Murat Gassiev.

POUND FOR POUND

1 **GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
Kazakhstan • 38-0-1 (34 KOs)

2 **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)

3 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 33-0-0 (24 KOs)

4 **ALEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 15-0-0 (11 KOs)

5 **MIKEY GARCIA**
U.S. • 38-0-0 (30 KOs)

6 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 16-0-0 (14 KOs)

7 **SRISASKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
Thailand • 46-4-1 (41 KOs)

8 **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
U.S. • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)

9 **SERGEY KOVALEV**
Russia • 32-2-1 (28 KOs)

10 **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines • 41-1-4 (23 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND: If there were any doubts about Aleksandr Usyk already owning the No. 10 position on this list, they were ruthlessly quashed by his brilliant performance against Murat Gassiev in the World Boxing Super Series cruiserweight final. Usyk vaulted all the way up to No. 4.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: With his shutout decision over Gassiev (to reiterate that: a shutout decision against a popular Russian fighting in Moscow), Usyk achieved undisputed champion status with the Ring belt and all four sanctioning body titles – the first to do so in the 39-year history of the division. His elevation to the champion slot left room for undefeated Moldovan Constantin Bejenaru at No. 10, while Gassiev remained at No. 2 and Mairis Briedis (who won a tedious and meaningless 10-rounder on the undercard) ended up at No. 1 from No. 3.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: England's Rocky Fielding replaced Juergen Braehmer on the list at No. 10 after handing Tyron Zeuge (unrated) his first loss – a fifth-round stoppage, no less.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Jaime Munguia stayed at No. 4 but grew up a bit in his unanimous decision win over veteran Liam Smith, who fell from No. 6 but stayed on the list at No. 10 after a very solid challenge.

WELTERWEIGHTS: First off, a correction: Last month, Jeff Horn was supposed to drop to No. 10 after his loss to Terence Crawford, not No. 6, so the list was adjusted accordingly. Then Manny Pacquiao scored a terrific win, his first knockout since 2009, with a seventh-round stoppage of No. 8-rated Lucas Matthysse, who was dropped from the list. You'd think Pacman would deserve more than just rising from No. 7 (6 after the Horn fix) to No. 5, but as good as

Junior welterweight Josh Taylor (right) received the first gut check of his bright pro career against former beltholder Viktor Postol (although the scorecards did not reflect his struggle).

he looked, he's still on the verge of 40 and he's looking up at probably the strongest Top 4 in boxing: Keith Thurman (No. 1), Errol Spence (No. 2), Crawford (No. 3) and Shawn Porter (No. 4). The vacancy created by Matthysse's departure was filled by Cuban Yordenis Ugas.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Josh Taylor (No. 6 last month) and Viktor Postol (No. 2) switched places after Taylor won a unanimous decision with scorecards that gave no credit to a wily performance from Postol.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Dejan Zlaticanin (No. 8 last month) dropped off the list after getting stopped in the second round by Roberto Ramirez (unrated). With D.Z. gone, Jose Pedraza moved in at No. 10.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No. 10-rated Evgeny Chuprakov notched a nice win with a decision over Ernie Sanchez (unrated), but Eduardo Hernandez one-upped him with a first-round stoppage of Marlyn Cabrera (unrated), so the undefeated Mexican snatched the bottom spot on the list.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No change.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No change.

FLYWEIGHTS: Moruti Mthalane weathered a late rally from Muhammad Waseem to win the vacant IBF title by a narrow decision. Mthalane rose from No. 2 to No. 1 and Waseem dropped from No. 9 to No. 10 after his first loss (but only his ninth pro fight).

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Carlos Canizales (No. 4 last month) gained a rank after a 12th-round stoppage of Chinese Olympian Lu Bin, who made a brave choice of opponents in just his second pro fight.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Ryuya Yamanaka (No. 4 last month) fell short in the second defense of his WBO title, losing a unanimous decision to Filipino Vic Saludar, who went from unranked to No. 5. Yamanaka dropped to No. 8 and Saludar's arrival pushed Deejay Kriel off the list. Simphiwe Khonco then climbed from No. 7 to No. 6 after a unanimous decision over Toto Landero (unrated). RING

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C (VACANT)
1 ANTHONY JOSHUA — U.K. • 21-0-0 (20 KOs)
2 DEONTAY WILDER — U.S. • 40-0-0 (39 KOs)
3 ALEXANDER POVETKIN — Russia • 34-1-0 (24 KOs)
4 JOSEPH PARKER — New Zealand • 24-1-0 (18 KOs)
5 LUIS ORTIZ — Cuba • 28-1-0 (24 KOs)
6 DILLIAN WHYTE — U.K. • 23-1-0 (17 KOs)
7 DOMINIC BREAZEALE — U.S. • 19-1-0 (17 KOs)
8 JARRELL MILLER — U.S. • 21-0-1 (18 KOs)
9 ADAM KOWNACKI — U.S. • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)
10 TYSON FURY — U.K. • 26-0-0 (19 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C ALEKSANDR USYK — Ukraine • 15-0-0 (11 KOs)
1 MAIRIS BRIEDIS — Latvia • 24-1-0 (18 KOs)
2 MURAT GASSIEV — Russia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)
3 DENIS LEBEDEV — Russia • 30-2-0 (22 KOs)
4 YUNIER DORTICOS — Cuba • 22-1-0 (21 KOs)
5 KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI — Poland • 30-1-0 (19 KOs)
6 MAKSIM VLASOV — Russia • 42-2-0 (25 KOs)
7 KEVIN LERENA — S. Africa • 21-1-0 (9 KOs)
8 ANDREW TABITI — U.S. • 16-0-0 (13 KOs)
9 ILUNGA MAKABU — Congo • 21-2-0 (20 KOs)
10 CONSTANTIN BEJENARU — Moldova • 13-0-0 (3 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C (VACANT)
1 SERGEY KOVALEV — Russia • 32-2-1 (28 KOs)
2 DMITRY BIVOL — Russia • 13-0-0 (11 KOs)
3 ADONIS STEVENSON — Canada • 29-1-1 (24 KOs)
4 BADOU JACK — Sweden • 22-1-3 (13 KOs)
5 ELEIDER ALVAREZ — Colombia • 23-0-0 (11 KOs)
6 OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK — Ukraine • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
7 ARTUR BETERBIEV — Russia • 12-0-0 (12 KOs)
8 SULLIVAN BARRERA — Cuba • 21-2-0 (14 KOs)
9 MARCUS BROWNE — U.S. • 21-0-0 (16 KOs)
10 JOE SMITH JR. — U.S. • 24-2-0 (20 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C (VACANT)
1 GEORGE GROVES — U.K. • 28-3-0 (20 KOs)
2 GILBERTO RAMIREZ — Mexico • 38-0-0 (25 KOs)
3 CALLUM SMITH — U.K. • 24-0-0 (17 KOs)
5 DAVID BENAVIDEZ — U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)
6 JOSE UZCATEGUI — Venezuela • 27-2-0 (23 KOs)
7 JAMES DEGALE — U.K. • 24-2-1 (14 KOs)
8 ANTHONY DIRRELL — U.S. • 32-1-1 (24 KOs)
4 CALEB TRUAX — U.S. • 29-4-2 (18 KOs)
9 CHRIS EUBANK JR. — U.K. • 26-2-0 (20 KOs)
10 ROCKY FIELDING — U.K. • 27-1-0 (15 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of July 22, 2018

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

C (VACANT)
1 GENNADY GOLOVKIN
Kaz. • 38-0-1 (34 KOs)
2 DANIEL JACOBS
U.S. • 34-2-0 (29 KOs)
3 BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
U.K. • 26-0-0 (12 KOs)
4 SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO
Ukraine • 12-0-0 (10 KOs)
5 JERMALL CHARLO
U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)
6 RYOTA MURATA
Japan • 14-1-0 (11 KOs)
7 DEMETRIUS ANDRADE
U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)
8 DAVID LEMIEUX
Canada • 39-4-0 (33 KOs)
9 HASSAN N'DAM
Cameroon • 36-3-0 (21 KOs)
10 GARY O'SULLIVAN
Ireland • 28-2-0 (20 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

C (VACANT)
1 JARRETT HURD
U.S. • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)
2 JERMELL CHARLO
U.S. • 31-0-0 (15 KOs)
3 ERISLANDY LARA
Cuba • 25-3-2 (14 KOs)
4 JAIME MUNGUIA
Mexico • 30-0-0 (25 KOs)
5 BRIAN CASTANO
Argentina • 15-0-0 (11 KOs)
6 MICHEL SORO
France • 32-2-1 (21 KOs)
7 JULIAN WILLIAMS
U.S. • 25-1-1 (15 KOs)
8 KELL BROOK
U.K. • 37-2-0 (26 KOs)
9 AUSTIN TROUT
U.S. • 31-5-0 (17 KOs)
10 LIAM SMITH
U.K. • 26-2-1 (14 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

C (VACANT)
1 KEITH THURMAN
U.S. • 28-0-0 (22 KOs)
2 ERROL SPENCE
U.S. • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)
3 TERENCE CRAWFORD
U.S. • 33-0-0 (24 KOs)
4 SHAWN PORTER
U.S. • 28-2-1 (17 KOs)
5 MANNY PACQUIAO
Phil. • 60-7-2 (39 KOs)
6 DANNY GARCIA
U.S. • 34-1-0 (20 KOs)
7 JESSIE VARGAS
U.S. • 28-2-1 (10 KOs)
8 EGIDIJUS KAVALIAUSKAS
Lithuania • 20-0-0 (16 KOs)
9 JEFF HORN
Australia • 18-1-1 (12 KOs)
10 YORDENIS UGAS
Cuba • 22-3-0 (11 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

C (VACANT)
1 REGIS PROGRAIS
U.S. • 22-0-0 (19 KOs)
2 JOSH TAYLOR
U.K. • 13-0-0 (11 KOs)
3 KIRYL RELIKH
Belarus • 22-2-0 (19 KOs)
4 JOSE RAMIREZ
U.S. • 22-0-0 (16 KOs)
5 ANTONIO OROZCO
U.S. • 27-0-0 (17 KOs)
6 VIKTOR POSTOL
Ukraine • 29-2-0 (12 KOs)
7 EDUARD TROYANOVSKY
Russia • 27-1-0 (24 KOs)
8 MAURICE HOOKER
U.S. • 24-0-3 (16 KOs)
9 SERGEY LIPINETS
Russia • 13-1-0 (10 KOs)
10 IVAN BARANCHYK
Russia • 18-0-0 (11 KOs)

Jaime Munguia's inexperience showed as he tried (in vain) to knock out rugged and ring-savvy Liam Smith...

...while seasoned veteran Manny Pacquiao stuck to boxing and let the stoppage (his first since 2009) come to him against Lucas Matthysse.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

C VASYL LOMACHENKO
Ukraine • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)
1 JORGE LINARES
Venezuela • 44-4-0 (27 KOs)
2 MIKEY GARCIA
U.S. • 38-0-0 (30 KOs)
3 ROBERT EASTER
U.S. • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)
4 RAYMUNDO BELTRAN
Mexico • 35-7-1 (21 KOs)
5 RICHARD COMMEY
Ghana • 26-2-0 (23 KOs)
6 ANTHONY CROLLA
U.K. • 33-6-3 (13 KOs)
7 LUKE CAMPBELL
U.K. • 18-2-0 (15 KOs)
8 YVAN MENDY
France • 40-4-1 (19 KOs)
9 LEWIS RITSON
U.K. • 16-0-0 (10 KOs)
10 JOSE PEDRAZA
Puerto Rico • 24-1-0 (12 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

C (VACANT)
1 MIGUEL BERCHELT
Mexico • 34-1-0 (30 KOs)
2 GERVONTA DAVIS
U.S. • 20-0-0 (19 KOs)
3 ALBERTO MACHADO
P.R. • 20-0-0 (16 KOs)
4 FRANCISCO VARGAS
Mexico • 25-1-2 (18 KOs)
5 TEVIN FARMER
U.S. • 25-4-1 (5 KOs)
6 MIGUEL ROMAN
Mexico • 60-12-0 (47 KOs)
7 JEZREEL CORRALES
Panama • 22-2-0 (8 KOs)
8 JHONNY GONZALEZ
Mexico • 66-10-0 (54 KOs)
9 CHRISTOPHER DIAZ
Puerto Rico • 23-0-0 (15 KOs)
10 EDUARDO HERNANDEZ
Mexico • 26-0-0 (23 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

C (VACANT)
1 LEO SANTA CRUZ
U.S. • 35-1-1 (19 KOs)
2 GARY RUSSELL JR.
U.S. • 29-1-0 (17 KOs)
3 CARL FRAMPTON
U.K. • 25-1-0 (14 KOs)
4 OSCAR VALDEZ
Mexico • 24-0-0 (19 KOs)
5 ABNER MARES
Mexico • 31-3-1 (15 KOs)
6 JOSH WARRINGTON
U.K. • 27-0-0 (6 KOs)
7 LEE SELBY
U.K. • 26-2-0 (9 KOs)
8 JOSEPH DIAZ JR.
U.S. • 26-1-0 (14 KOs)
9 JESUS ROJAS
P.R. • 26-1-2 (19 KOs)
10 SCOTT QUIGG
U.K. • 34-2-2 (25 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

C (VACANT)
1 GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
Cuba • 17-1-0 (11 KOs)
2 ISAAC DOGBOE
Ghana • 19-0-0 (13 KOs)
3 REY VARGAS
Mexico • 32-0-0 (22 KOs)
4 DANIEL ROMAN
U.S. • 25-2-1 (9 KOs)
5 JESSIE MAGDALENO
U.S. • 25-1-0 (18 KOs)
6 DIEGO DE LA HOYA
Mexico • 21-0-0 (10 KOs)
7 RYOSUKE IWASA
Japan • 25-2-0 (16 KOs)
8 TOMOKI KAMEDA
Japan • 35-2-0 (20 KOs)
9 EMANUEL NAVARRETE
Mexico • 25-1-0 (22 KOs)
10 GAVIN MCDONNELL
U.K. • 20-1-2 (5 KOs)

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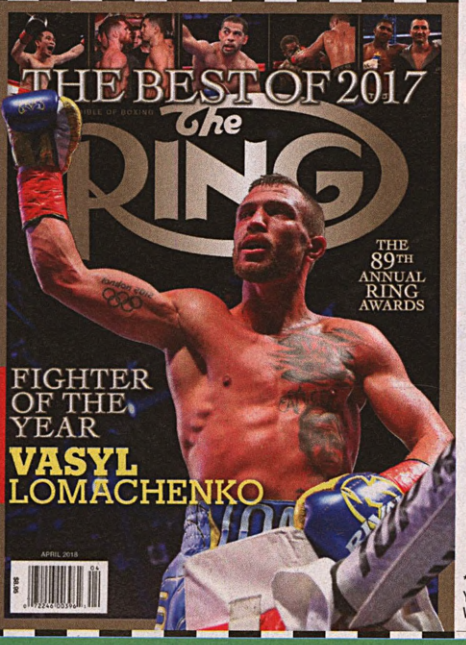

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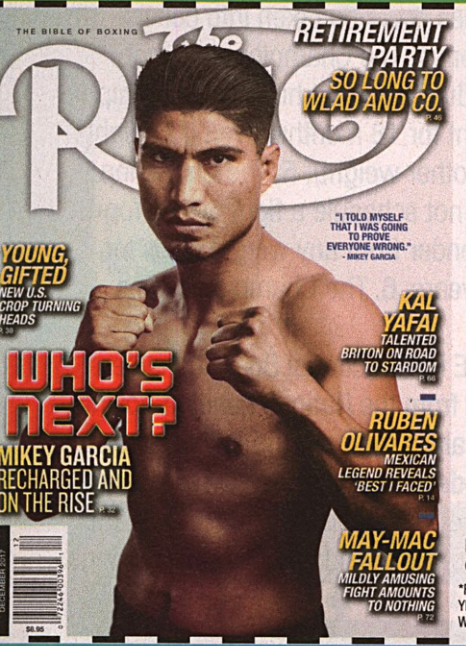

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RATINGS

Through fights of July 22, 2018

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 ZOLANI TETE
S. Africa • 27-3-0 (21 KOs)

2 NAOYA INOUE
Japan • 16-0-0 (14 KOs)

3 RYAN BURNETT
U.K. • 19-0-0 (9 KOs)

4 EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ
P.R. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)

5 JUAN CARLOS PAYANO
Dom. Rep. • 20-1-0 (9 KOs)

6 ZHANAT ZHAKIYANOV
Kaz. • 27-2-0 (18 KOs)

7 LIBORIO SOLIS
Venezuela • 26-5-1 (12 KOs)

8 LEE HASKINS
U.K. • 35-4-0 (14 KOs)

9 JASON MOLONEY
Australia • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)

10 NORDINE OUBAALI
France • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

C SRISASKET SOR RUNGVISAI
Thailand • 46-4-1 (41 KOs)

1 JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA
Mexico • 36-3-0 (25 KOs)

2 KHALID YAFAI
U.K. • 24-0-0 (15 KOs)

3 JERWIN ANCAJAS
Phil. • 30-1-1 (20 KOs)

4 RAU'SHEE WARREN
U.S. • 16-2-0 (4 KOs)

5 ROMAN GONZALEZ
Nicaragua • 46-2-0 (38 KOs)

6 MCWILLIAMS ARROYO
Puerto Rico • 17-3-0 (14 KOs)

7 CARLOS CUADRAS
Mexico • 36-3-1 (27 KOs)

8 REX TSO
China • 22-0-0 (13 KOs)

9 ANDREW MOLONEY
Australia • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)

10 WENFENG GE
China • 10-0-0 (6 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 MORUTI MTHALANE
S. Africa • 36-2-0 (24 KOs)

2 ARTEM DALAKIAN
Ukraine • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)

3 ANDREW SELBY
U.K. • 10-0-0 (5 KOs)

4 CRISTOFER ROSALES
Nicaragua • 27-3-0 (18 KOs)

5 SHO KIMURA
Japan • 16-1-2 (9 KOs)

6 KOSEI TANAKA
Japan • 11-0-0 (7 KOs)

7 MASAYUKI KURODA
Japan • 29-7-3 (16 KOs)

8 FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.
Mexico • 28-4-1 (20 KOs)

9 VINCENT LEGRAND
France • 27-0-0 (16 KOs)

10 MUHAMMAD WASEEM
Pakistan • 8-1-0 (6 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

C HEKKIE BUDLER
S. Africa • 32-3-0 (10 KOs)

1 RYOICHI TAGUCHI
Japan • 27-3-2 (12 KOs)

2 KEN SHIRO
Japan • 13-0-0 (7 KOs)

3 CARLOS CANIZALES
Venezuela • 21-0-1 (17 KOs)

4 MILAN MELINDO
Phil. • 37-3-0 (13 KOs)

5 PEDRO GUEVARA
Mexico • 31-3-1 (18 KOs)

6 FELIX ALVARADO
Nicaragua • 33-2-0 (29 KOs)

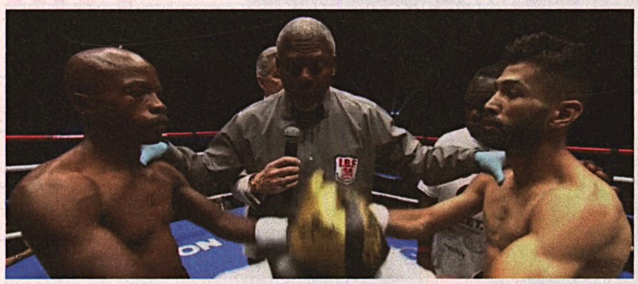
7 ANGEL ACOSTA
P.R. • 18-1-0 (18 KOs)

8 AKIRA YAEGASHI
Japan • 26-6-0 (14 KOs)

9 GANIGAN LOPEZ
Mexico • 34-8-0 (19 KOs)

10 REY LORETO
Phil. • 24-14-0 (16 KOs)

Junior bantamweight champ Srisaket Sor Rungvisai stayed busy with an over-the-weight blowout of Young Gil Bae.



Moruti Mthalane (left) regained the IBF flyweight title (that he never lost in the ring) with a close decision over Muhammad Waseem on the Pacquiao-Matthysse undercard.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 WANHENG MENAYOTHIN
Thailand • 50-0-0 (18 KOs)

2 KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART
Thailand • 17-0-0 (7 KOs)

3 HIROTO KYOGUCHI
Japan • 10-0-0 (7 KOs)

4 BYRON ROJAS
Nicaragua • 24-3-3 (10 KOs)

5 VIC SALUDAR
Philippines • 18-3-0 (10 KOs)

6 SIMPHIWE KHONCO
S. Africa • 19-5-0 (7 KOs)

7 JOSE ARGUMEDO
Mexico • 22-4-1 (13 KOs)

8 RYUYA YAMANAKA
Japan • 16-3-0 (5 KOs)

9 TATSUYA FUKUHARA
Japan • 20-6-6 (7 KOs)

10 TSUBASA KOURA
Japan • 13-0-0 (9 KOs)

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Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the RING title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

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It was clear in a recent satellite conference (facing page) that the respect once shared between Gennady Golovkin and Canelo Alvarez has evaporated. Now each of the middleweight stars is firmly focused on seeing the other eat his words on September 15.

BOILING POINT

WITH GENUINE ANIMOSITY FLARING BETWEEN THE TWO CAMPS, **CANELO-GOLOVKIN 2** HAS BECOME MORE 'FIGHT' THAN BOXING MATCH

By **Steve Kim**

ALVAREZ: SEAN M. HAFFEY; GOLOVKIN: FREDERICK J. BROWN

In the build-up to the middleweight championship fight between Gennady Golovkin and Saul "Canelo" Alvarez last September, the two stars were rather cordial. The second time around … not so much. Given that their first matchup ended in a controversial draw, followed by Canelo's positive tests for clenbuterol, his subsequent suspension by the Nevada Athletic Commission and the cancellation of their May 5 rematch date, all niceties have gone out the window.

Even the negotiations for the rematch were more intense than just your garden-variety give-and-take. For Golovkin, this seemed to be a very personal matter, and he insisted – and eventually received – a

much higher percentage than he did in the first bout, when he garnered a career-high payday.

And the ill feelings are mutual. Golovkin and Alvarez will not see each other until the week of their scheduled rematch on September 15 at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas (the site of their last encounter). There was no press tour or even a press conference for the new date, and many of the usual event-selling programs by HBO (which will produce the pay-per-view broadcast in the U.S.), such as "Face-Off," did not occur. The animosity runs that deep between two fighters who are generally very respectful to their foes.

On July 3 on its Facebook page, Golden Boy Promotions organized a joint teleconference with both boxers streaming live from their respective training camps (Golovkin in Big Bear Lake, California; Alvarez in Guadalajara). Tension between the two sides was evident as they answered questions from host Mauricio Pedraza. It was clear that something had changed.

"That little respect that I had or that we had, it's been lost, and come September 15, it's just him and me in the ring, whether I have the support or not," Alvarez said. "It's just going to be him and me, and he'll see."

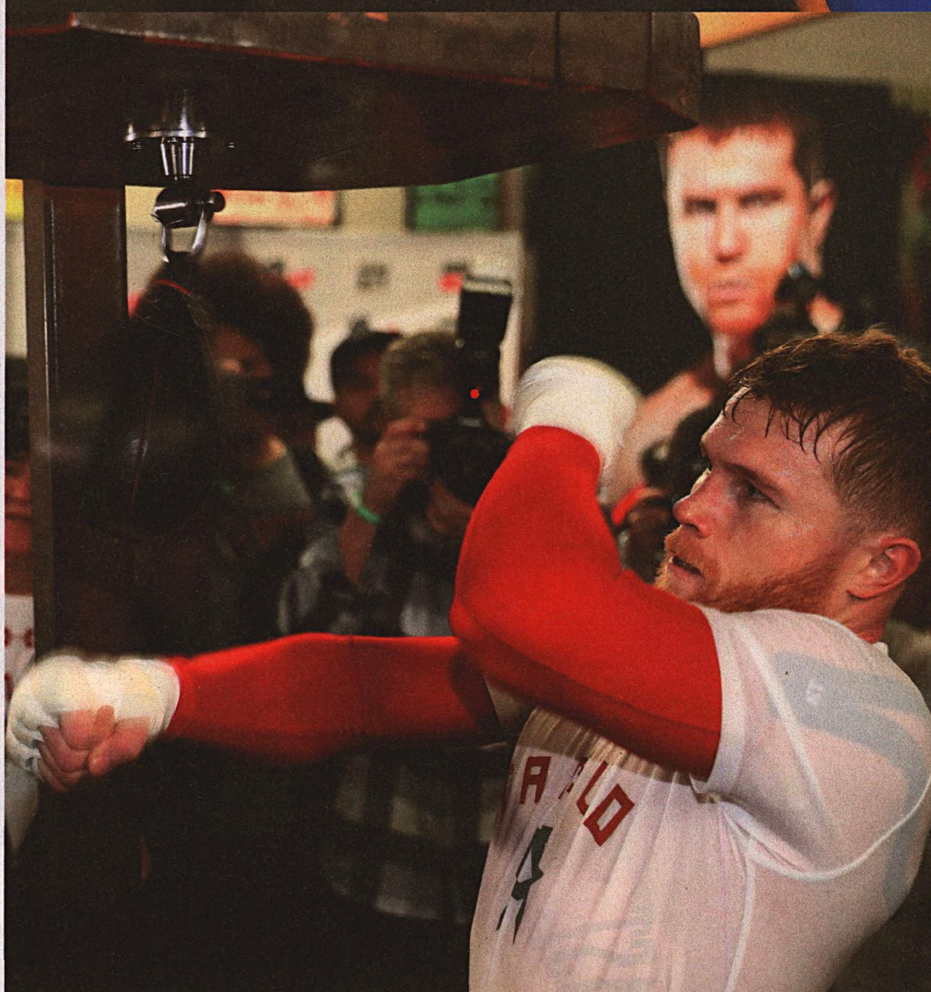
To which Golovkin responded (in Russian through an interpreter): "Respect is respect. We have a different mentality. We have a different understanding of what respect is. I think Canelo's team, by doing what they did, they lost some respect from their fans. But it's not important. I do have respect for all the fighters, all the athletes, all the champions who fight at this level, and I think at the very end, we will find a way to shake each other's hand, regardless of the outcome, regardless of what we think before the fight. As two men, we should be able to face each other and shake each other's hand at the end."

In general, the answers of both boxers were short and to the point. You got the sense that they wanted to be anywhere else, but that this rather unusual step of promoting this big pay-per-view event was required.

Other highlights from this scrum:

"The bottom line is Canelo has the bigger piece of the pie because he's the draw," said Alvarez's promoter, Oscar De

Neither Golovkin nor Canelo was interested in breaking camp to partake in a press tour once they finally agreed to terms for the September rematch in Las Vegas.



La Hoya. "He's the one that brings in the people. On September 15, you will have millions and millions of fans supporting Canelo and supporting GGG, as well."

De La Hoya emphasized that this fight needed to be made, especially to avoid a scenario like other big rematches that never came to fruition, including sequels to Marvin Hagler vs. Tommy Hearns, Hagler vs. Sugar Ray Leonard, and Felix Trinidad against The Golden Boy himself.

"So this fight had to take place," De La Hoya said. "September 15 will be such an important day for boxing. I strongly feel that the way this fight is going to turn out, the fans are going to be extremely happy, extremely proud, and boxing will once again rise to the pinnacle of where it should be."

Alvarez, though subdued, admitted that the cordial relationship he once had with Golovkin is gone. "They disrespected (with) everything they have been saying, everything they have been doing, all their actions. Now it's different. It's personal."

Golovkin won't apologize for making allegations that Alvarez used performance-enhancing drugs prior to their first bout and was caught trying to cheat for the rematch, but he'd rather focus on the rematch than talk about his suspicions.

"I want to tell (Canelo) that we should be ready for the fight. You know, we should be ready for this fight for us. We should be ready for this fight for our fans. We should get ready. I think we should both be in the best shape for this fight, and the better we will be for this fight, the sweeter the taste of victory will be for us."

Alvarez doesn't need to be told to train hard. He knows both he and Golovkin will bring more to the ring in the rematch.

"Without a doubt, it's going to be a different fight. It's going to be a better fight. Look, we know what we have to do," Alvarez said through Golden Boy matchmaker Robert Diaz. "I'm going in with a stronger strategy, a better strategy, and it's going to be a much better fight. We already know each other. Now we know what we have to do."

Diaz, who is extremely close with this Alvarez camp, spoke to The Ring a few days after this online get-together. He says Alvarez's animosity toward Team Golovkin, especially GGG's trainer, Abel Sanchez, is genuine.

"Canelo, he always respects his opponents as a professional, but all the talk, all the videos, all the mocking, I mean anybody – not just Canelo – would get upset. Canelo is very proud, and has always been very careful of his image. Obviously he feels offended and he feels he's been pushed to another level.

"So all the respect that is usually there between two sportsmen is gone. Abel hasn't stopped talking. Triple-G's mocking and all the talk they've been doing, I could see it in Saul's demeanor – he's not happy. He can't wait to get in that ring."

Alvarez isn't just fighting for Golovkin's middleweight titles, but for something much more important to him: his reputation and honor.

"He's fighting for Mexico, he's fighting for himself, he's fighting to shut these people up," said Diaz. "I mean, it's all packaged in one. Every time he enters the ring, he wants to win. Add in that extra motivation, and now he wants to knock this guy out."

From the Golovkin side, promoter Tom Loeffler told The Ring, "In the first promotion, it was pretty clear there was mutual respect between the guys. They had trained together, they had sparred together. Gennady was pretty disappointed with the decision – you saw that was the first time Mexican fans booed Canelo in any fight – and Gennady was disappointed with the fact that Canelo got suspended, or at least tested positive and because of the positive test got suspended."

The normally understated Golovkin had made it very clear in the aftermath of Alvarez's positive tests that he simply didn't believe the Mexican's story about tainted meat being the cause of his problems.

This is now a blood feud of sorts, which Fernando Vargas, one of the fiercest of competitors of his era, is no stranger to. His 2002 bout with De La Hoya was the quintessential boxing rivalry – two popular, world-class boxers who had an open disdain for one another.

Ironically, Vargas says that he and Oscar are now "good friends," but emphasizes that heated emotions have to be controlled during a fight.

"I wasn't reckless," he told The Ring. "For somebody to be reckless, it doesn't work for you. It doesn't benefit you, but if you're calm and collected and do your game plan and fight the way you're supposed to fight, then I think it helps you. Because you generally have a dislike for the guy. You generally have a dislike for the person you're going to fight. So I think it helps."

So what might the result of all this newfound hatred be in September?

"I think it makes for a great fight," Vargas says with a chuckle. "They genuinely don't like each other. There's been talk back and forth between trainers, the trainers don't like each other, and Abel Sanchez has been talking to get under Canelo's skin. He's done a great job. So, I think it's going to be a great fight."

Diaz agrees with the former two-time junior middleweight titleholder.

"I thought it was going to be a better fight to begin with because they both know each other. They've gone 12 rounds, they both know how to take more risks. But then add fuel to the fire … absolutely."

Now all that's left is for the two sides to settle things in the ring on the night of September 15 in what will once again be one of the most anticipated nights in all of boxing. As they prepare far away from one another, they will constantly be on each other's minds. In many ways, their careers will be defined by this rematch. And all the rhetoric won't mean all that much as they touch gloves in the center of the ring.

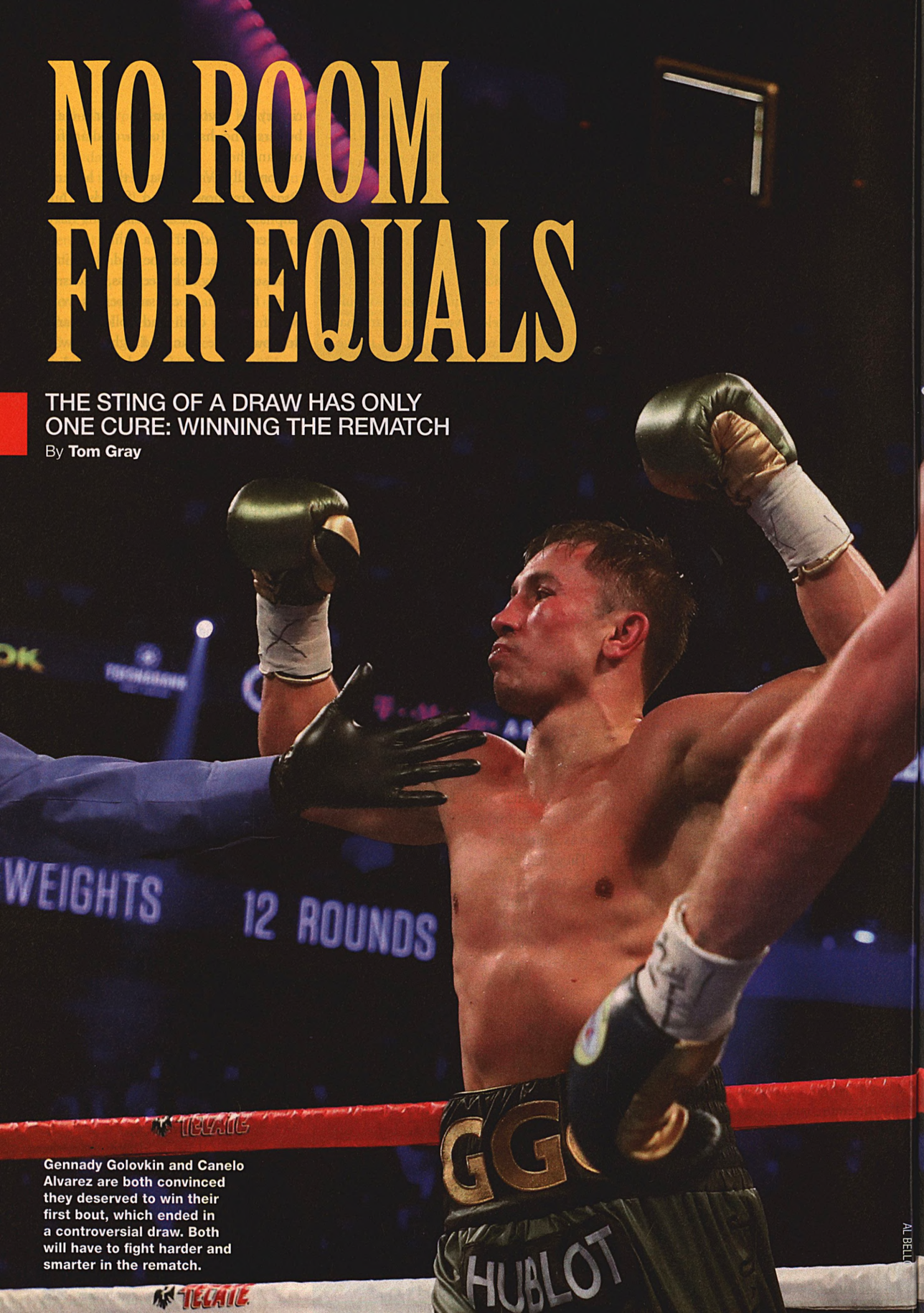
But Loeffler did get in one parting shot during the gathering.

"I know Oscar is down there in Mexico with Canelo. Make sure with Canelo that there's less Mexican meat and more Mexican style this time. Make sure everything goes the right way."

NO ROOM FOR EQUALS

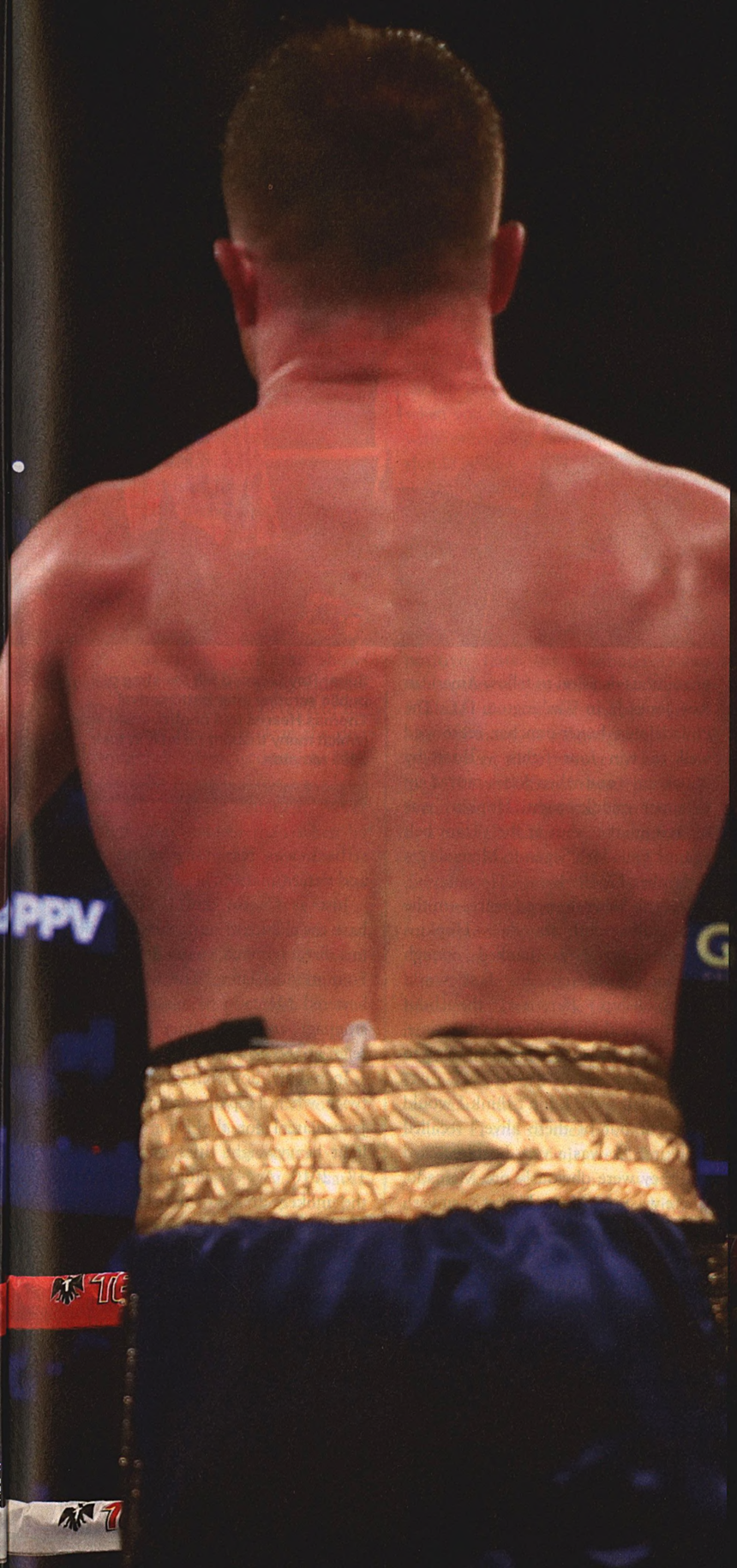
THE STING OF A DRAW HAS ONLY ONE CURE: WINNING THE REMATCH

By **Tom Gray**



Gennady Golovkin and Canelo Alvarez are both convinced they deserved to win their first bout, which ended in a controversial draw. Both will have to fight harder and smarter in the rematch.

AL BELL



"This bout is a draw, ladies and gentlemen!" It's a phrase no one wants to hear.

An even prizefight leaves one completely unfulfilled and, except for bookies and the confident few who gambled on the long odds, nobody wins. Two quality athletes have trained themselves to the bone, only to be rewarded with what is essentially a stalemate. Fight fans have endured weeks, months, or even years of pre-fight anticipation and, in the end, all that's left is a knockout dose of nothing.

And controversy is never far behind.

When a bout is declared even, one of the fighters is usually adjudged the winner by the public. Marvelous Marvin Hagler should have begun his middleweight title reign in November 1979, but Vito Antuofermo retained on a tie verdict. In September 1993, Pernell Whitaker clearly won his draw against Julio Cesar Chavez, but two of the three judges missed the fight. And in March 1999, Lennox Lewis had to settle for a draw after he appeared to have dominated Evander Holyfield.

On September 16, 2017, at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, the consensus among ringsiders was that unified middleweight titleholder Gennady Golovkin had outpointed lineal and then-Ring champion Canelo Alvarez with room to spare. Predictably, when ring announcer Michael Buffer notified 22,358 fans that the bout was a draw, the reaction was beyond hostile. Alvarez was booed incessantly for the first time in his decorated career.

Former five-weight world champion and boxing legend Sugar Ray Leonard can relate. On June 12, 1989, Leonard was dropped twice by archrival Thomas Hearns in a thrilling world-title rematch contested at super middleweight. Despite having stopped Hearns in their classic welterweight unification showdown in September 1981, Leonard appeared to have fallen way short in the return. However, "The Sugarman" was rescued by a notorious draw and left the arena with chants of "bullshit" ringing in his ears.

"That reaction was a lot more painful than Tommy's punches," said Leonard, who now freely admits that Hearns should have been given the verdict that

night. "When I go into the ring, I go in to do my job. When I don't get the best out of myself, or if I don't give the fans what they deserve, it's painful. I contemplated quitting the sport because of that.

"Canelo will have felt that fan reaction. Fighters are just like anyone else in that respect; they don't like that kind of thing. The sound of booing or the negative words will have bothered Canelo, without question. It's very uncomfortable to be on the end of that. You don't want to hear booing when you're accustomed to cheers."

Leonard wasn't the first great fighter to be granted a favor when the numbers were collated. In 1976, the same year he took gold at the Montreal Olympics, Leonard's boxing idol, Muhammad Ali, was deemed fortunate to retain his heavyweight championship in close calls against Jimmy Young and Ken Norton. Many felt that Ali's popularity and glamour gave him an unfair advantage with judges, and Leonard's escape in the Hearns rematch was viewed in much the same way.

"The public looked upon that result as a bit of a con," said journalist Wallace Matthews, who covered the fight for Newsday. "It was obvious to me who had won that fight, although I admit I was a Hearns fan back then. I liked him as a puncher. I liked him as a person and, at that time, he was a bit more real than Ray.

"The Leonard-Hearns rivalry reminded me of Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier. Leonard was flashy and glib, whereas Tommy was always being real. He wasn't polished and he said what he felt. Ray came across like an athlete, but when you spoke to Tommy, you felt like he was a real guy. Because of that, you wanted to see him win. But he got fucked over pretty good that night."

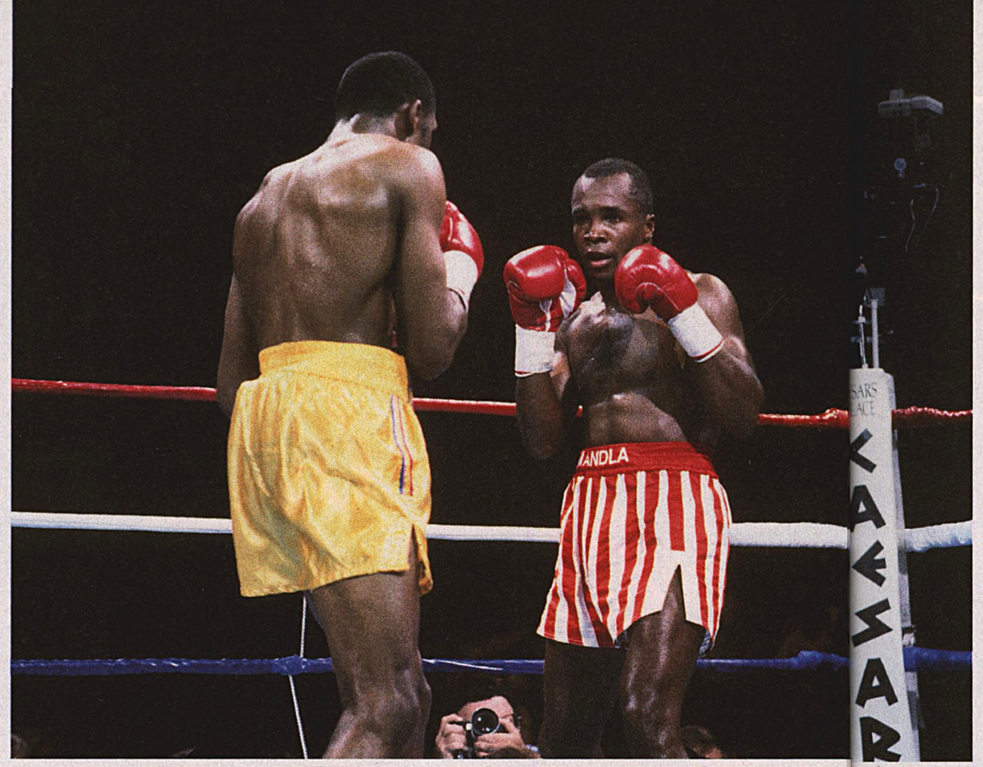
Both Canelo-Golovkin and Leonard-Hearns II took place in Las Vegas, a glitzy locale synonymous with dubious decisions in boxing. However, our next draw took place 3,500 miles away in the city of Quito, capital of Ecuador.

In May 1993, Bernard Hopkins lost a bout for the vacant IBF middleweight title when he dropped a 12-round unanimous decision to fellow American Roy Jones Jr. in Washington, D.C. The Philadelphia boxer-puncher regrouped well to win four fights – three by knockout – and when Jones moved up to super middleweight, Hopkins was offered another shot at the vacant belt against Ecuador's Segundo Mercado on December 17, 1994.

Despite being dropped twice – in the fifth and seventh rounds – Hopkins appeared to have banked enough sessions to capture his first world championship. However, the bout was declared a draw and, this time, personality and glamour had nothing to do with it.

"If I had won, I don't think I would have got out of there alive," recalled Hopkins. "It was a very hostile crowd and they were obviously pro-Mercado. There was a lot of trouble between Peru and Ecuador at that time (the Cenepa War broke out the following month), and it wasn't pleasant.

"Being honest, the draw probably worked out better for me, but I was very upset at the time. The challenge, then, was to prove I had it spiritually and mentally to become champion and reach greatness. But I don't believe I would have got to where I did in my career if I didn't come through that experience. I think overcoming that setback was testimony to my drive and determination."



Sugar Ray Leonard felt the sting of public scrutiny after battling rival Thomas Hearns to a controversial draw (which many thought he lost) in their 1989 rematch.

BOB DAEMMRICH

Just as Canelo and Golovkin will have the chance to settle their argument in a direct rematch, so too did Hopkins. Four months later, "The Executioner" battered Mercado to a seventh-round stoppage, and a legendary 10-year title reign at 160 pounds had begun.

Incredibly, however, lightning struck twice when Hopkins faced Canadian Jean Pascal for the Ring and WBC light heavyweight titles on December 18, 2010. At 45, Hopkins harbored the unlikely dream of eclipsing George Foreman's record of being the oldest fighter to win a recognized world championship. Again Hopkins was in enemy territory, this time Quebec City. Again his opponent had him down twice. Again he appeared to have taken command, only for the bout to be declared a 12-round majority draw.

"The Pascal draw pissed me off," snapped Hopkins, who, incredibly, at 46 years old, outpointed Pascal in a rematch on May 21, 2011, to break the record Foreman had held for over 16 years. "That felt unfair, and I had to dig deep and remind myself that I'd been there before. You must fight through adversity and never give up. That's my motto in life and in the sport of boxing.

"That was Bernard's personality," said Matthews, who first encountered Hopkins not long after the fighter was released from a five-year stint in prison for armed robbery. "He's a contrarian, and if he can prove you wrong, he's going to do it. That was his motivation, and there are a lot of guys like that in this sport."

If Hopkins was a contrarian, then the show-stealing Leonard was your ultimate nonconformist. While he never had the chance to get Hearns back in the ring following their infamous draw, the Hall of Famer knows all about switching tactics for a direct rematch. Never was that more evident than when he made Roberto Duran surrender at the Superdome in New Orleans on November 25, 1980.

Five months earlier, Duran had defeated Leonard by 15-round unanimous decision and claimed his WBC welterweight title. It was a ferocious battle that saw Leonard attempt to match Duran on the inside, a strategy that cost him heavily. The defeat was painful, physically and emotionally, and the former champion, not for the last time, considered retirement.

That didn't last long, because Leonard, just like Canelo and Golovkin today, became obsessed with proving his superiority. "Initially, I was reticent because the first fight was so hard," acknowledged Leonard. "I probably got hit more times in that fight than any other. I had to reach down deep and go to places that very few fighters have gone. But I knew I could win if I fought the right fight.

"Winning that rematch was even sweeter than if I'd won the first time. It was bizarre. It was satisfying. It was every adjective you could possibly think of. It was an amazing victory. They tried to take it away from me, but no matter what way you want to call it, Duran quit and I made him quit.

"It was a natural rematch, and so is Canelo-GGG. This truly means something. People are looking forward to this fight, and this is a chance for both fighters to get it right. There should be even more desire now, and when you have two guys this talented, with everything that's at stake, you should get one hell of a fight."

Realistically, given the controversy that forced the original May 5 fight date to be pushed back, Alvarez will enter the T-Mobile Arena on September 15 as the bad guy. Most observers feel that the Mexican boxer-puncher was lucky last time, and the positive tests for clenbuterol and subsequent suspension by the Nevada Athletic Commission have marked him, for many, as a fistic pariah.

However, the controversy has only made the rescheduled rematch a bigger event, and Golovkin has been installed as a pre-fight favorite. The majority of experts also seem to be leaning in that direction. However, there are those who are leaving the door wide open for the underdog.

"Having watched the first fight, I think Canelo can win the rematch," said Matthews. "I know the Golovkin camp hates this narrative, but he is aging. He wasn't the same guy against Canelo, Danny Jacobs or Kell Brook. If Canelo can start the same way he fought Rounds 11 and 12, then he can win this.

"The big variable is, were those last rounds down to Canelo, or were they down to Golovkin? Did Golovkin run out of steam and did that give Canelo a chance to do things he couldn't do earlier in the fight? If I thought those rounds were real, as in a product of Canelo figuring out his man, then I would say he's going to win on points. But, if Golovkin wasn't as conditioned as he should have been, or if age was an issue, he's a smart guy and he might come out more aggressively and knock Canelo out. It's all about those last two rounds."

Gathering a prediction from Hopkins seemed somewhat futile. The former champion has a promotional interest in Alvarez and he wasn't about to wax lyrical about Golovkin's chances in the fight. However, Hopkins was eager to point out that the Mexico theme surrounding Canelo and the Mexican Independence Day weekend will have no influence on the atmosphere or the outcome.

"As far as I'm concerned, it's two Mexicans in that ring," said the future Hall of Famer. "The Mexican fans have embraced GGG because he uses the Mexican style. When and why he started that, I don't really know, but it was a great promotional hook because Mexicans love guys who put themselves on the line.

"There's no real favorite in terms of the crowd in Las Vegas. You have one fighter from Mexico against another who uses the Mexican style and they are fighting on (a Mexican holiday). GGG may as well be named Golovkez; that's how close he is to the Mexican fans."

So, what about the combat itself? Will a tactical adjustment be enough for one of these fighters to get over the line? Can Golovkin, The Ring's No. 1 pound-for-pound fighter, apply even more pressure and suck the will and ambition from his opponent? Can Alvarez exploit the openings more ruthlessly this time and come away with a historic victory?

Sugar Ray Leonard knows only too well that a fight isn't always decided on who gets it right tactically. A showdown of this magnitude often comes down to character. Who's willing to take risks and deal with the potential consequences? Who's willing to dig that little bit deeper when it matters most? There are a variety of intangibles that make up a great fighter, and Leonard utilized all of them during his own career.

"I often tell people that we all have the ability to release strength and power from within," said the former champion. "What separates us is having the ability to activate it."

It remains to be seen who can activate on September 15.

BATTLE PLAN: CANELO ALVAREZ VS. GENNADY GOLOVKIN II

TWO TRAINERS MAP OUT THE TWEAKS EACH FIGHTER SHOULD MAKE IN ORDER TO WIN THE REMATCH

By **Derrick James and Stephen "Breadman" Edwards**
(as told to Michael Woods)

After a draw, everyone's got an opinion on what should've happened, what went wrong and who's to blame. And then there are the people who actually have to figure out what to do in the return bout.

The Ring picked the minds of Derrick James and Stephen "Breadman" Edwards to help analyze the Canelo Alvarez-Gennady Golovkin rematch from a unique perspective – that of the trainer mapping out the preparation and fight strategy for the middleweight stars.

James, The Ring's 2017 Trainer of the Year, admires Alvarez's career accomplishments and command of the ring. He's also kept a close eye on the two-division champ's progression in the event the stars of his Texas stable – WBC 154-pound titleholder Jermell Charlo and IBF welterweight beltholder Errol Spence Jr. – one day move up in weight to challenge the Mexican attraction. James, who has at times been critical of Golovkin in interviews, shared his thoughts on how he would train Alvarez for the night of May 5.

Edwards, who trains junior middleweight contender Julian Williams, does not share James' criticism for Golovkin. The popular coach and boxing columnist believes Golovkin and the middleweight veteran's trainer, Abel Sanchez, are bound for the International Boxing Hall of Fame. Edwards, who witnessed Golovkin's work ethic and ring prowess up close when Williams served as a sparring partner for the first fight with Canelo, shared his thoughts on how he would get GGG ready for the second go-around. »

DERRICK JAMES ON HOW HE WOULD TRAIN ALVAREZ:

I'd work on his conditioning a little more, have him do more sprints. I think he boxed a beautiful fight the first time. He boxed perfect and made Golovkin a little hesitant to throw. But in the rematch, Canelo should be more aggressive, push GGG out of his comfort zone, push him back on his heels. He should be boxing like he did, because he did a great job slipping in and out, and had he not gotten a little tired, it would have been a different fight.

So, I would have Canelo do more sprints in camp. I'd train him for a different type of fight. Once he got in there, it was a little more intense than he expected, maybe. His training was good for a basic fight, but in the hyped condition he didn't hold up.

He'd do sprints at the fitness center or at a track or on a treadmill, 40 to 50 yards. On the treadmill, at say a grade of 10 to 11 percent, he'd do one-minute sprints and then get off and right away do a minute on the mitts. Then back onto the treadmill.

He has to work a little harder than he prepared to before. GGG kept coming; the intensity level was hyped. Canelo was in shape to do 12, but not at that pace.

Would I have him spar bigger guys and smaller guys? Everything. Even though Golovkin is not a really fast fighter, I'd have Canelo spar fast guys, because then – compared to their handspeed – GGG would seem a bit slower. For sparring, it would be the same deal, but maybe push him a little more. This is a bigger fight. He needs to make a statement, and we have to make him work a little harder to get to the next level, to push him to greatness.

I'd ask for more volume, definitely, because in every round he has to make some sort of statement to differentiate from the other guy, show who you are. I would have him jab more, but he'd still use the movement. He would make GGG reach for him, and he'd continue the counterpunching. Make Golovkin reach, open him up. We'd try to back him up, because I don't think GGG is great inside. Canelo has better footspeed than GGG as well. I'd want not so much bouncing around; it's about creating distance to get that good punching angle.

I want Canelo to be very defensive-minded also. He won't be able to move and get away the whole fight – that's asinine to think – but he will have to stop and fight … The arsenal is deadly and GGG is heavy-handed.

Would I tweak his defense? I think he did really well, but not so much bouncing on his toes this time. He needs to choose *why* to move.

Would I have him watch tape of anyone? Maybe watch Sugar Ray Leonard vs. Marvin Hagler. I would watch how Ray boxed in spurts, used those legs, used that jab, that distance.

So, will Canelo win? I think he will. I think he may be more aggressive this time. GGG in the first fight wasn't deadly. He wasn't a killer. Canelo did well to take the fight away, but this time he'll have to push himself to a whole 'nother level.

They both fought really well the first time. This fight is about conditioning level and stepping outside the comfort zone to be great.

STEPHEN "BREADMAN" EDWARDS ON HOW HE WOULD TRAIN GOLOVKIN:

Before I get into anything, I want to say up front that Abel Sanchez is doing a great job with Golovkin. He's probably a Hall of Fame coach. I don't want to imply that I think there's really anything GGG and him could do better together. Their record speaks for itself.

Anyway, I don't know what GGG does with his conditioning. I know he runs a lot, so I would probably say since he's an older fighter, that he start camp a little later so he doesn't wear out.

I think he's a clean fighter, and when you're a clean fighter, there's a greater chance of overtraining. You can't just recover like that at 35 and 36. I'd maybe cut his miles, or days he runs, by 20 percent. If he runs every day, switch to three to four days a week, and maybe add some low-impact stuff, like swimming.

Yeah, 35 is kind of old – even in this era – for a middleweight.

Regarding sparring, I've never been more impressed with anybody in terms of the caliber of sparring they have. I've seen it personally. I give them all the credit. He was sparring

There was plenty of give and take in the first fight. Whoever does more to upset the balance will win the rematch.

five world-class boxers, two to three rounds per guy, four-minute rounds in the altitude. It's killer to do that! I'd probably cut that down, get two to three guys in camp.

Yeah, maybe cut everything by 20 percent.

The last couple of fights, GGG looked like he was pushing it to the wall, like Roman "Chocolatito" Gonzalez before his fights with Srisaket Sor Rungvisai – getting to that brink.

So, the game plan ... I saw Canelo doing a few things to GGG in the first fight, and though I thought GGG won, I thought Canelo performed better as far as applying his technical skills. But the Golovkin jab took over the middle rounds and Canelo didn't have the stamina to hang. Canelo has to take off rounds, but as far as skills displayed, Canelo displayed more skills in the fight.

It will be tough for GGG if there are no adjustments. The only punch he landed consistently was the jab. I saw Canelo escaping the power punches, Canelo moving to the left, using the same escape route every single time. A fighter of GGG's caliber – and I think he's headed to the Hall of Fame; he's one of the best ever at 160 pounds – he has to adjust to that move a little better. GGG has to stay on Canelo's left shoulder, slide to his right, step to his right, cut off the escape route. He has to force another exit route. He has to punch on the move a little better. In the first fight, I was pulling for GGG, so I'm saying to myself, "He keeps missing the right hand over and over. Maybe put it to the body." He has to force Canelo to go another way.

And another thing I noticed that was very bothersome was Golovkin allowing Canelo to get too comfy on the ropes. Canelo was using the ropes as a third leg. Golovkin, at one point, was destroying guys like Matt Macklin on the ropes; he was the best in the world at putting a guy on the ropes and leaving him there.

Canelo may not have visibly hurt GGG, but I think he punches hard enough to make Golovkin hesitate to run up on him on the ropes. Canelo doesn't have the stamina or legs to keep GGG in center ring. He was using the ropes to spring off and counter. I think the jab was the only punch Golovkin felt comfortable throwing without getting countered too much. We can talk about a guy's chin – even a guy with a great chin like GGG, he knows his own chin, he knows how he feels when hit. I think Canelo's punches had an effect; they just didn't have a visible effect.

Golovkin used to spend a lot of time body-punching; he arguably has one of the best left hooks to the body in the last 20 years. I'd like to see him revert to his animalistic days when he was beating up Macklin and Marco Antonio Rubio.

But maybe Canelo caught GGG at the right time, and maybe he's not the savage he once was.

In the first fight, Canelo didn't run, but GGG couldn't get off like he normally does. Now, people say the last thing to go is power, but maybe the first to go is punch selection. Maybe he can't put together punches the way he used to. One thing GGG can do to make it easier is to hit Canelo with straight punches to the body rather than "round" punches. Straight jabs, straight shots to the body. That'll make it easier for softening him up for the money hook around the elbow. Golovkin's got longer arms and the better jab, and straight shots to the body are very difficult to defend against.

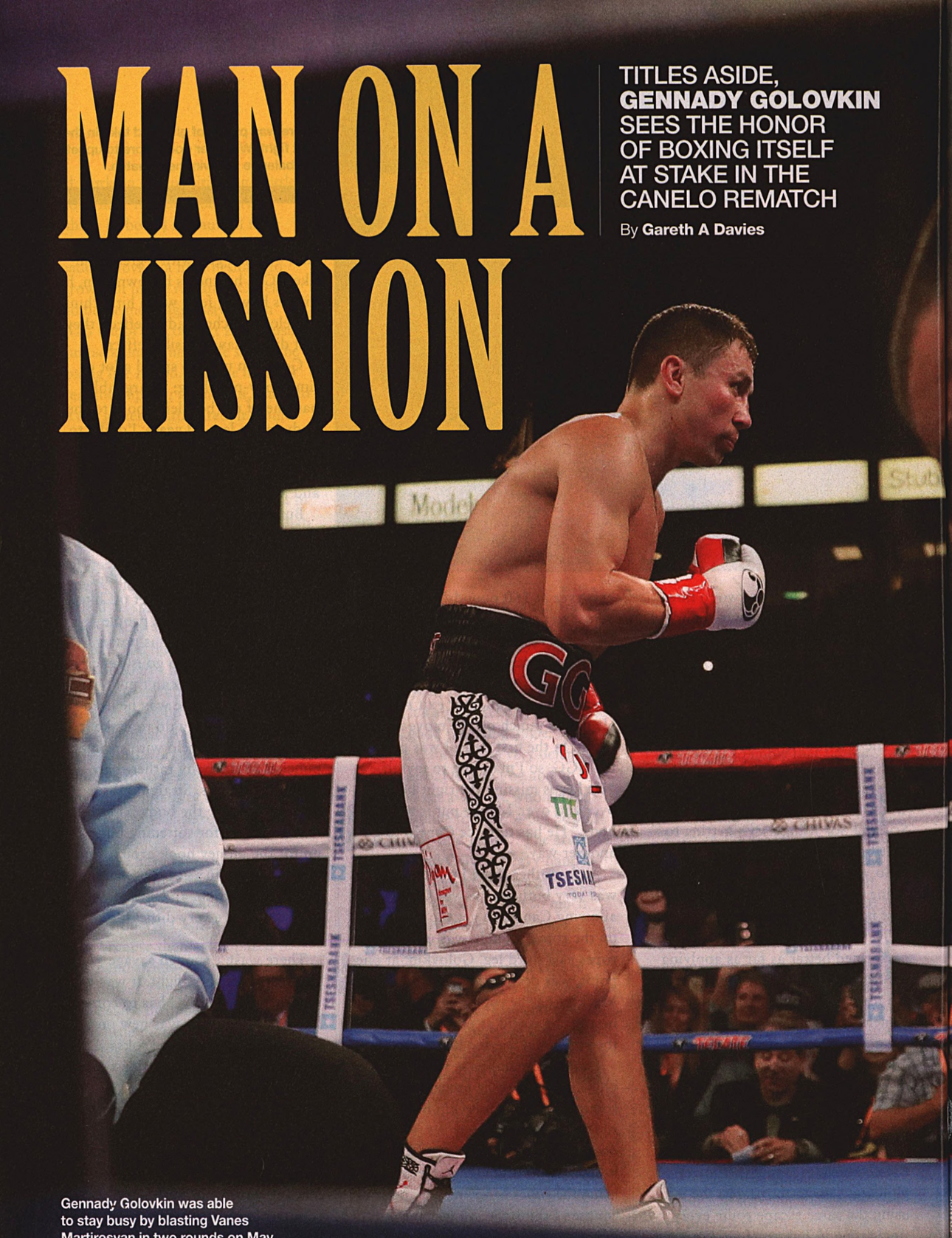
There wasn't enough savage pressure in the first fight. It was very, very calculated. GGG has to come like he did when he was new on the scene against Grzegorz Proksa. Back then, he was a tank. He didn't play with anyone.

Both are talented, but in different ways. The more GGG hesitates, the more time he gives Canelo to think. And Canelo is the faster, quicker fighter. He's the better counterpuncher and he has the better fast-twitch fibers. If the guy's got a little more talent, the way you overcome that is with savagery!

MAN ON A MISSION

TITLES ASIDE, **GENNADY GOLOVKIN** SEES THE HONOR OF BOXING ITSELF AT STAKE IN THE CANELO REMATCH

By **Gareth A Davies**



Gennady Golovkin was able to stay busy by blasting Vanes Martirosyan in two rounds on May 5, but he still has a full year's worth of resentment saved up for his rematch with Canelo Alvarez.

KEYSTONE-FRANCE

Gennady Golovkin holds court at Wolfgang Puck's fine dinery on the floor of the MGM Grand Hotel, among the gamblers and chancers of Sin City, and in deep conversation – all of which is translated from his native tongue – rips loud and long on his opponent, Saul "Canelo" Alvarez, the Nevada Athletic Commission and even Golden Boy Promotions. The content is powerful, but masks an anger and motivation put into words later by Abel Sanchez, his trainer, and Tom Loeffler, his promoter.

The unbeaten 36-year-old talks intently – rather like he fights – with a serious, quiet menace. That's the beauty of Triple G and, indeed, of the enticing rematch with the Mexican boxing star after their controversial draw a year back. Golovkin remains a wrecking-ball fighter with freakish power in his elbow-to-fist levers, but does not purposely want to do any of his talking outside the ring.

While the Kazakhstani has been a frighteningly dangerous and dominant force in the 160-pound division for years, he conversely and openly espouses gentlemanly conduct. Always has, in fact. There is a beautiful brutality about him that has been undeniable.

Yet now he craves painting a masterpiece of destruction inside the ring in the Mojave desert against his middleweight rival. Sanchez and Loeffler both told The Ring that

Golovkin was all smiles after the Martirosyan fight, but he gets serious (and downright surly) whenever the rematch with Alvarez is brought up.

AP PHOTO/CHRIS CARLSON

they have never witnessed their man so motivated.

It is not his wont to critique people, but on this day early in July, before going into camp, Golovkin is unusually verbose. It offers an insight into the mind of a man deeply focused 10 weeks out from arguably the most important fight of his career. This is most likely his greatest legacy fight. The fight that dots the "i" and crosses the "t" on a money fight, yes, but one that in his eyes requires a profound victory.

"We have different mentalities; I know that now. What (Canelo has) done has disrespected the sport, the public and his supporters," explains Golovkin. "Before, I respected him. And I respect people who respect boxing. These guys don't respect boxing, only business," he offers, cryptic at first, but making full sense once he elucidates: "Because he used drugs. Whether it's drugs or doping, he's a smart guy. He lost a lot of respect."

The delay in the rematch, the refusal from Canelo to embark on a media tour and the leniency of the Nevada Athletic Commission in meting out a six-month ban for two positive tests for clenbuterol are what have angered Triple G the most. Motivated him, made it personal.

"For me, personally, it was not bad, but it was for boxing. For what happened and what he did, the doping and drugs, he did a lot of damage to boxing itself. It's something terrible to do for the sport. But that's why we have a commission. For somebody like him to make such a bad mistake and then continue to work with the same people, with the same team who brought him to this situation, it shows he doesn't recognize certain things.

"I pointed out some things that were evident, some marks on his body that looked like injections (prior to the first fight)," alleges Golovkin. "It was obvious he was taking something. I was really surprised it took so long for the commission to come to a decision. You should ask the commission why they did what they did. But everyone is responsible for his or her actions."

What Triple G has done is channel his bitterness – that anger – into motivation. It sounds like he is looking for a knockout. "I'm very calm. The Nevada Athletic Commission doesn't really affect me at all. I think I won the first fight; the decision is only a consequence. I know Canelo wanted to fight in Vegas and I did make a lot of concessions, because he would only fight in Vegas. The important thing is fighting and having a second fight with him. It's important for boxing, the fans and both of us."

The second fight is destined to be different, and more profound than just leather being traded.

"Of course we look at Canelo differently after 12 rounds," says Golovkin. "We know each other much better. The second fight will be much more interesting because of that. He was able to run around me in the first fight. It will be more difficult to do that in the second fight. I don't think I need to lure him into a toe-to-toe fight, but I think he will need to fight in the second fight, because he lost so much respect from the fans." It's an intriguing theory. Makes sense, moreover.

Canelo eschewed a media tour ahead of this second coming: "He talks a lot about how it doesn't make sense to stand face-to-face. Of course it made sense to stand face-to-face. He understands his situation right now and he didn't want to feel the pressure from the people watching. People are not stupid."

Golovkin pauses. "He would have been faced with some uncomfortable questions, and he probably doesn't have enough courage to face the truth, to face those unpleasant questions. The important thing is that we are now fighting. I would have fought him anyway in May, even if he had taken drugs or not."

But they didn't fight, of course. Golovkin negotiated hard, had a fight camp and perfunctory victory in May (a second-round knockout of Vanes Martirosyan), and is oiled and ready for another blockbuster in mid-September. "They're playing their own poker game, and whenever they tried to play their cards, it wasn't always true," he says. "The deal which we made is very profitable for both of us, but for them in particular. So whenever they make any deals, signed any contracts, they only think about themselves. We're very different people. Look at how the Canelo team deals with HBO and the fans. They don't really respect them. It makes the fans and the people who support them look foolish."

Stripped of his IBF belt over a mandatory defense dispute, Triple G makes no bones about the fact that he considers that belt his. "I want all the belts; that's my goal. I believe I'm still IBF champion, but I will probably face (WBO titleholder) Billy Joe Saunders next (after Canelo). But that will be down to my promoter, Tom Loeffler."

There is the prospect of facing Canelo for a third time, of course. "It's very difficult to predict," says Golovkin. "But of course if the fight is spectacular, it would be easy for him to want a third one. I said that about Canelo and I will repeat it: We are two different people. I'm not saying I'm good and he's bad, but we have two different personalities.

"I would have been disappointed if I never fought him again. But I wouldn't have stopped my career either. It's always interesting to have a second fight. The fans would be disappointed if we didn't fight again. It's important for history, our fans and us."

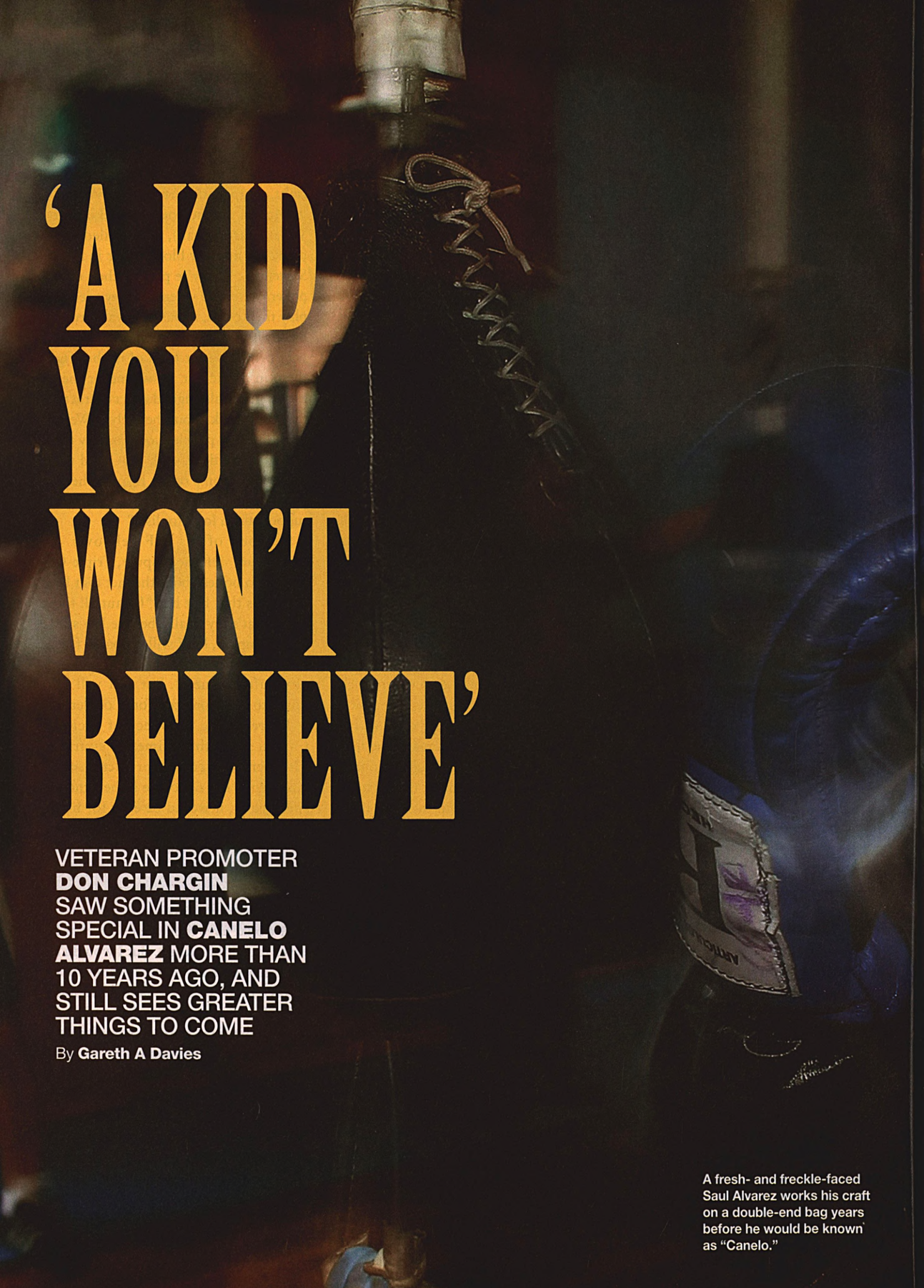
Somehow, with all the troubles of the last 12 months, it feels even bigger this time. This is set up to be even better, with more than money, pride and world titles on the line. RING

Gareth A Davies is a Ring Magazine columnist and Boxing Correspondent for the London Telegraph.

'A KID YOU WON'T BELIEVE'

VETERAN PROMOTER **DON CHARGIN** SAW SOMETHING SPECIAL IN **CANELO ALVAREZ** MORE THAN 10 YEARS AGO, AND STILL SEES GREATER THINGS TO COME

By **Gareth A Davies**



A fresh- and freckle-faced Saul Alvarez works his craft on a double-end bag years before he would be known as "Canelo."

Stories pour forth from 90-year-old Don Chargin as he paints pictures of boxing from yesteryear with an acuity and enthusiasm that would have had Damon Runyon grinning from ear to ear.

There are few folk active in the sport today capable of relating intimate details from ringside, and indeed from the lives of a group of the greatest middleweights we have ever seen: Sugar Ray Robinson, Carmen Basilio, Jake LaMotta, Gene Fullmer, Dick Tiger ... little stories, tiny details, nudges and winks.

How Basilio turned on Mike Tyson at Canastota; how Fullmer met Tiger at Candlestick Park; how Robinson ("The finest technical fighter I ever saw. Peerless.") told him that trainer George Gainsford taught him nothing about boxing, but did teach him what loyalty is ...

Now he is talking of Canelo Alvarez and Gennady Golovkin – two great modern middleweight fighters.

Consider this: Don was 23 when he promoted his first fight event. He and his late wife, Lorraine, are International Boxing Hall of Fame inductees, as is the other lady he worked so closely with – Aileen Eaton.

Significantly, though, it was Chargin, a longtime consultant and adviser to the Golden Boy Promotions matchmaking team, notably Eric Gomez, who first told Oscar De La Hoya about a special, red-haired kid from Mexico he had heard of. That was more than 10 years ago.

And Chargin, after the world watched that first brilliant yet controversial contest between GGG and Canelo, believes the Mexican will get the win the second time around.

Hall of Famer Don Chargin recognized Canelo Alvarez's talent – and star potential – years before the red-headed Mexican made a name for himself in the U.S.

Here, today, with one of boxing's venerable characters at his Warren Leopold-designed home overlooking the Pacific Ocean – a house built on giant poles sunk into the hillside in Cambria, Southern California – Don is talking of Mexico's famous fighting export to the United States.

It is enhanced by Chargin's home as our backdrop, a museum to boxing – paintings and posters and trophies and signed gloves and memorabilia adorning every wall and tabletop and corridor – testament to a life immersed in and dedicated to the Noble Art.

He recalls that he first heard about Canelo when the fighter was a teenager: "Everyone was talking about him. Newspaper friends from Mexico had told me about him even before there was any television footage of him. They were telling me, 'There's a kid here you won't believe.' They were right."

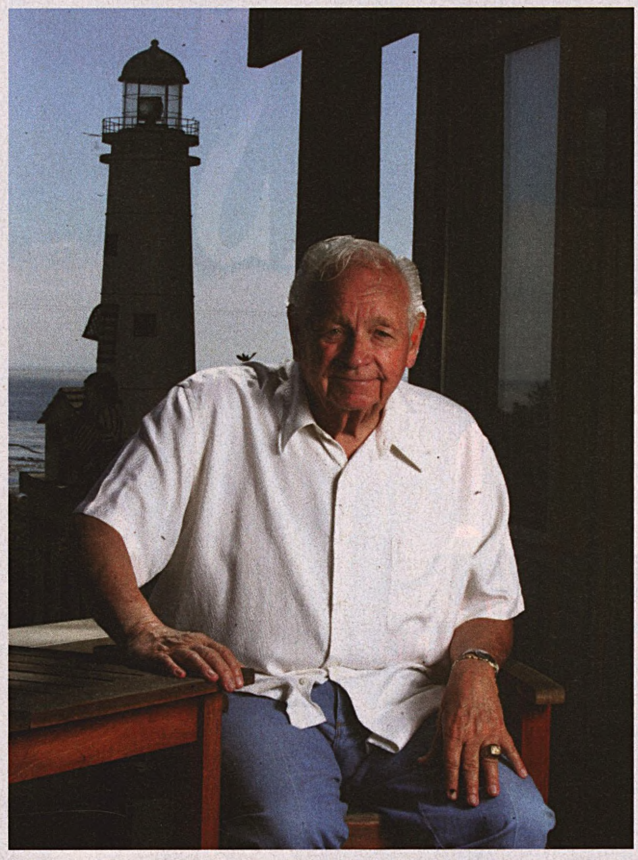
Canelo was already showing great poise and dangerous body shots, and had a look about him. He has proven, of course, to be a huge star, garnering a great following. "I'll tell you, really, the thing that started it for me, when I first saw him, was him being a redhead, freckle-faced Mexican. It set him apart."

Chargin knows about being an entrepreneur. And what few know about him – and it probably helped him understand the promotional business – is that he studied journalism. He had written for the San Jose News and penned a column for Knockout Magazine. He knew a storyline when he saw it.

He certainly saw star quality in droves in Canelo.

"To see him in those early fights, before he even learned to fight, he was very aggressive and was knocking people out. I liked his movement. I liked he knew when to be aggressive, when to hold back. He had great body shots, too. People took to him right away. Some fighters have a way about them. And so it has shown. The gates he's drawn are tremendous."

So, on to Golovkin-Canelo 2 ...



Chargin earned the title "War-A-Week" during his many years as a top matchmaker in Los Angeles.

"Canelo thinks he made a mistake in the first Golovkin fight because he held back a little bit. I think he thinks he could have been more aggressive," Chargin noted (indeed we both did) that Golovkin was rocked late in the fight, that Alvarez was slowed by Golovkin in the middle rounds and that he needed to move.

But Chargin concurs that Golovkin "probably won" the first encounter. Not on the judges' cards, of course. The old boy has rewatched the fight several times.

"The first one, when I saw it first – and I was there – I thought Golovkin had the edge. I've watched the fight a few times since, and each time I watch it I see something different, something that makes it a little closer to me. That's why I like (Canelo) in the rematch. I think he learned something in that fight. I think it'll be more of a barnburner this time."

The shifting sands, of course, in the year between the first and second encounters, are the doping offenses out of competition. Chargin refuses to believe that Canelo has knowingly cheated.

"They had an explanation; it's happened to so many fighters in Mexico," he said. "Golovkin wanted to get a better deal, so he went after him. I don't believe he means Canelo is dirty. He took the tests for all of his fights, for both challenger and champion.

"He never had any trouble passing them before, because he always came to San Diego for six weeks to train. He was eating there. This time he was in Mexico and he'd been eating in Mexico. They call it tainted. We give cattle other things; it's not steroids. They shoot their cattle with steroids in Mexico. He should have been more careful, he knows it. But he wasn't."

Chargin believes what Canelo must do is go out there, defeat Golovkin and keep his momentum going.

"I think he's going to go on and be one of the greats. I really do. If he wins the Golovkin fight, they'll say he did it because he must have been high. You know they're going to test him right up to the thing, and he's not going to be high.

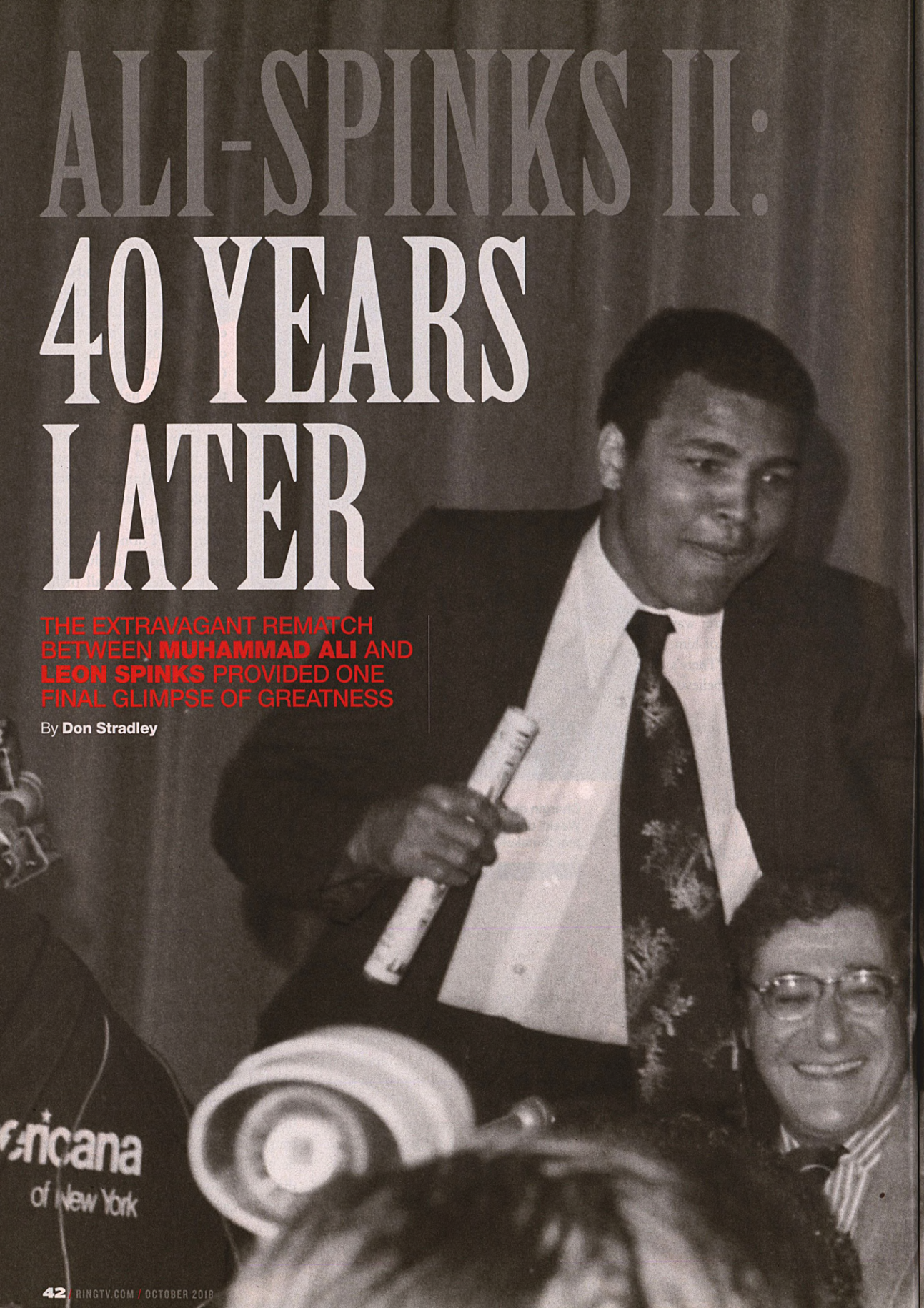
"I'm convinced he will win on points this time. I really think so. Golovkin is a tough guy, a good fighter. I'm not saying he is limited as a fighter, but I'll put it this way: I don't think he's unbeatable. I really can't wait for the fight on September 15; I truly think Canelo will do it this time." RING

GERARDO ZAVALA/AM MEDIA/ATINCONTENT/GETTY IMAGES

ALI-SPINKS II: 40 YEARS LATER

THE EXTRAVAGANT REMATCH BETWEEN **MUHAMMAD ALI** AND **LEON SPINKS** PROVIDED ONE FINAL GLIMPSE OF GREATNESS

By **Don Stradley**



Muhammad Ali was playful at the press conference for his rematch with Leon Spinks, but he was all business during the fight – the last victory of his legendary career.

"In 25 years of sports, I've never heard such a crowd," said ABC's Howard Cosell. "Never!" It was a Friday night in New Orleans, September 15, 1978, and Muhammad Ali was giving Leon Spinks a lesson in boxing. By the later rounds, as Ali appeared to be dancing away with the victory, Cosell was quoting Bob Dylan's "Forever Young" and praising Ali for his legendary career. "What an extraordinary man he has been in every way," Cosell said, his all-too-familiar voice competing with the "deafening din" inside the cavernous Superdome.

The rowdy atmosphere continued when Ali, the winner by unanimous decision, left the ring. "The crowd," novelist Ishmael Reed observed, "began swaying and moving like a papier-mâché dragon," while dozens of celebrities, including John Travolta, Sylvester Stallone and Liza Minnelli, followed after Ali as acolytes might a savior. Prior to the bout, Spinks' trainer, George Benton, had spoken of Ali in almost supernatural terms. "It's like there is a mystical force guiding his life," Benton said, "making him not like other men." Ali, now the first fighter to win the heavyweight title three times, returned to his dressing room and talked about his penchant for shocking the world. "I am from the House of Shock," he said.

Forty years later, it's easy to forget that Ali-Spinks II was one of the biggest sports stories of 1978, and how their first bout, won by Spinks and chosen as The Ring's Fight of the Year, had seemed like the continuation of a longstanding tradition, that of the aging champion losing to a younger challenger, a passing of the torch that usually resulted in the older fighter's exit from the profession.

Seven months earlier at the Las Vegas Hilton, it had been obvious as early as the first round that something odd was happening. Spinks, a 24-year-

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old barely out of the Olympics, a young fighter who'd had only seven pro fights and hadn't looked too good in any of them, was muscling his way through Ali's high guard and landing uppercuts. Ali tried to box, but Spinks won the round on sheer hustle – what Hunter S. Thompson dubbed his "pure kamikaze style." At the bell, Spinks patted Ali on the shoulder and walked briskly to his corner, upbeat. This was unheard of. Ali went to his own corner and remained standing, an old-timer's trick to make the other guy think he wasn't tired. But Ali had to know that he was in for a long night.

He no longer moved quickly, in the ring or out. He walked casually, like the boss cat in a pride of lions. Since regaining the heavyweight title a few years earlier from George Foreman in Africa, he had grown to hate training, often getting by on nothing but his experience and ring generalship. Yet he was enjoying a kind of fame unmatched by any fighter before or since. From children to the elderly, from citizens of the poorest countries to talk show hosts and world leaders, Ali was adored. There were cynics, of course, who resented Ali as just another greedy, overexposed celebrity. Endorsements for candy bars, bug spray and deodorant, plus appearing as himself in a Hollywood movie of his life, were just the most recent examples of a stardom that had turned increasingly gaudy.

Now the boss cat struggled. With each round, a growing sense of gloom permeated his corner; it was clear to Ali's handlers that the raggedy-looking challenger was beating their meal ticket. Spinks, an ex-Marine from St. Louis, had a ring style best described as "busy," all pumping shoulders and head moves, like Joe Frazier without the burning edge. The biggest thing in Spinks' favor was that he didn't fear Ali.

"I was very serious during the fight," Spinks said at the time, "but I also had a lot of fun. He kept saying things to me, trying to make me mad, but all he did was make me laugh. It was like he was telling me jokes. One time he called me a dirty name. I said, 'Oh, Ali, how could you say such a thing?' Can you imagine your idol calling you a dirty name?"

Ali tried dirty names and so much more, but Spinks was tireless. Ali rallied in the 10th, knocking Spinks wobbly with combinations, but he couldn't maintain the attack, not with Spinks hurling himself forward like an unruly dog. After the 15th round, a stormy three minutes chosen by The Ring as Round of the Year, Ali was exhausted and bleeding from the mouth. When the decision was announced – a split in Spinks' favor – Ali merely walked through the wild celebration in Spinks' corner, caught the new champion's attention, and winked. Then he was gone.

Mike Marley, reporting for the Las Vegas Sun at the time, recalls the fight well. "It was a stagnant promotion," he said. "No one was excited about it. Ali viewed it as drudgery, just another day at the office. A prime Ali would knock Leon out in two rounds. But he wasn't up for it. He was mentally vacant. He'd been through a very tough fight with Earnie Shavers and he wanted an easy opponent." Spinks, though, seemed galvanized by the opportunity. "Leon was a little sad at having to beat his hero, but Leon deserved it. I was glad the judges didn't screw him. The only person who thought Ali won was his brother, Rahman. In the dressing room he told Ali, 'You were robbed.' Ali said, 'Shut up.'"

Within weeks, Ali announced his plans to regain the championship. "I will drop bombs on Spinks," he said. "I'm gonna bury him."

And so, after goodwill trips to Russia and Bangladesh, Ali prepared to meet Spinks again.

Ali was solemn as he trained for the rematch. There was talk of his punishing regimen this time, but no amount of running or calisthenics would bring back the magic. The greatness, the speed, the ability to pull fights out of the fire, had been drained from Ali by fame, by women, by being the most important boxer in the history of the business. He was only 36, but he seemed weary and depleted. As he'd done many times in the past, Ali promised this would be his last fight.

"I've been doing it for 25 years, and you can only do so much wear to the body," Ali said. "It changes a man. It has changed me. I can see it. I can feel it."

What did he have left? He still had a jab. It was no longer quick, blinding or stinging, but he still had it. He had a right hand. Not the chopping right that had cut and KO'd so many fighters, but it was still useful. His legs were only good for a few rounds, and his reflexes were no longer sharp; all he had was a jab and a right hand, the first punches taught to him by Officer Joe Martin back in Louisville. Would this be enough?

"Greg Page, Tony Tubbs, and Michael Dokes were his sparring partners," Marley remembered. "Three guys who would become champions. He would just rope-a-dope and let them pound on him. I don't think that did him any good." There was also the job Ali did on his own psyche. "He'd mesmerize himself. He'd keep talking about winning the title for the third time. That's all he would talk about, until we were all sick of hearing it."

As for Spinks, he may have won the championship, but he didn't know how to be a champion. One alphabet group had already stripped him, leaving him with only the WBA belt. There were driving mishaps, a cocaine bust, silly behavior; he'd become a national joke, providing fodder for comedians ranging from Richard Pryor to Johnny Carson. During the week of the rematch in New Orleans, he spent his nights in seedy bars getting drunk. "I'm surprised," promoter Bob Arum said, "he didn't wind up with a knife in him."

The rematch was anything but stagnant. It was a kind of pop cultural phenomenon. An estimated audience of 90 million watched the event in some 80 nations. The bout drew a 46.7 rating, meaning nearly half of the televisions in America were tuned in. The attendance was 63,350, which at the time was the largest indoor attendance ever for a boxing match. Most were on their feet from the beginning, chanting, "Ali! Ali!"

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There were never any hard feelings between Muhammad and "Neon" Leon. "He's the greatest, I'm the latest," Spinks was fond of saying.

Once again the focus of a major event, Ali was buoyed by the vibe, by the sheer hokey spectacle of it all. Looking as somber as a judge, he entered the ring to "When The Saints Go Marching In," while Spinks came in to "The Marine's Hymn." After much ballyhoo, the year's biggest boxing drama began its second act.

The early rounds were close, each fighter trying to scratch out some territory, but by the sixth, Ali's confidence was growing. He jabbed and circled, threw enough rights to keep Spinks off-balance and controlled the action. If Spinks lunged forward, Ali merely grabbed him and held on. It was, as Pat Putnam of Sports Illustrated described, "a demonstration by an old master educating an inexperienced youngster in the fine points of the craft."

It helped that pandemonium reigned in Spinks' corner. Benton departed after a few rounds, angry that Spinks' other handlers were shouting him down. Spinks fought hard, but he looked unhappy. Ali's trainer, Angelo Dundee, teased Spinks without letup. At one point, Dundee shouted, "Goodbye, Leon!"

The fight played out in a series of mini-skirmishes, which Ali would get the best of before wrestling Spinks into the ropes. It wasn't a beautiful display of boxing, but it worked. Most surprising was Ali's movement; the old legend could still float like a butterfly. At various times, Ali stopped mid-ring to do a quick shuffle, bringing the customers to a roar that shook the ceiling of the Superdome. This was Ali, risen from the ashes to stick and move across the universe. The scorecards – 10-4-1, 10-4-1 and 11-4 – were almost unnecessary.

Beating Spinks wasn't on par with his most dramatic victories, but it was an important part of the Ali saga. And like all sequels, Ali-Spinks II wasn't quite as exciting as the original. However, like a sequel can sometimes be, the rematch was fun. It had a character we liked, and an ending that, though predictable, was satisfying. Order was restored; the king was back on his throne.

Spinks fought on for many more years, but his upset win over Ali would remain the highlight of his career. "Ali is still my idol," he said after losing the rematch.

Much has been forgotten since then, such as actress and Playboy model Edy Williams doing a striptease during the undercard; the accusation by Ali's camp that Spinks had been energized in the first bout by the contents of a mysterious brown bottle; Joe Frazier singing the national anthem in New Orleans; the intense row among promoters and investors after the rematch, with Ali claiming his payday was short by a million dollars; and how 1978 marked a turning point in heavyweight history, with WBC president Jose Sulaiman stripping Spinks for not fighting Ken Norton, which led to Larry Holmes winning that organization's belt, forever splintering what had once been the most cherished title in sports.

As for Ali, he had two more fights, lost both, and then went on to a life of health problems. If he'd stopped in 1978, maybe things would've been different. Of course, he probably felt invincible after winning the Battle of New Orleans. But in his quiet moments away from the crowds and the cameras, he knew nature always takes the last round.

He could see it. He could feel it.

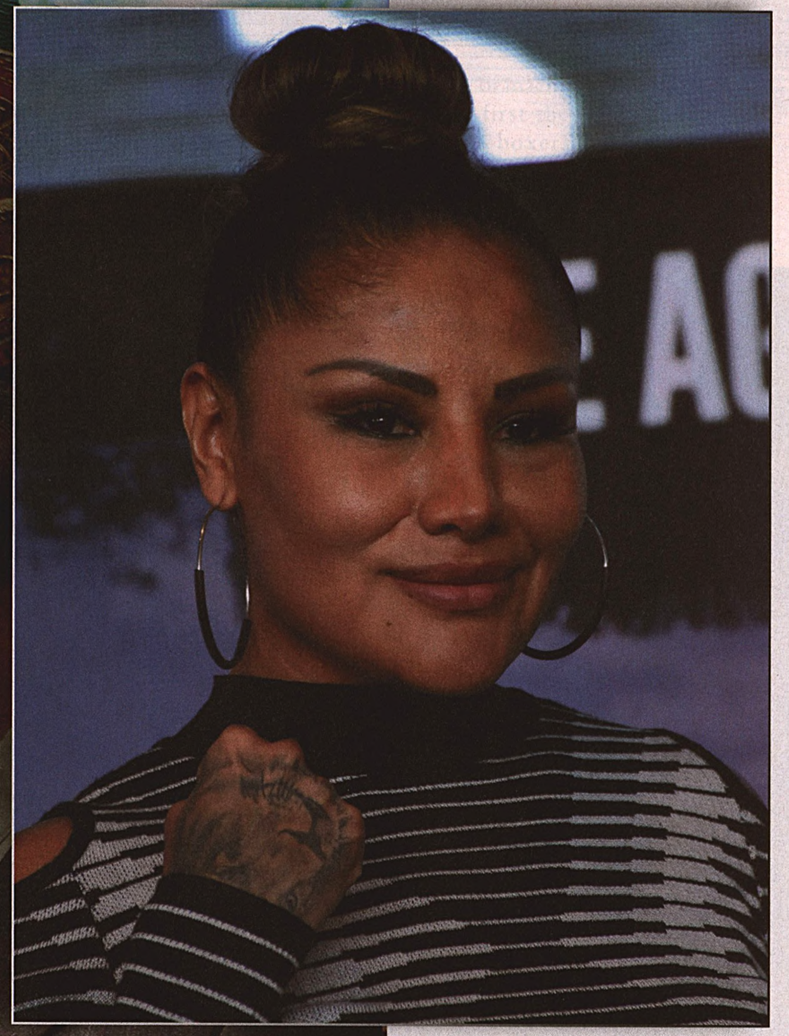
Mariana Juarez has literally willed herself into the forefront of Mexican boxing during her amazing 20-year pro career.

ALL IN

IN 2017, **MARIANA JUAREZ** GAMBLED HER CAREER ON ONE FIGHT. NOW THE PIONEERING VETERAN HAS PLANS BIGGER THAN EVER.

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

CARLOS TISCHLER/GETTY IMAGES

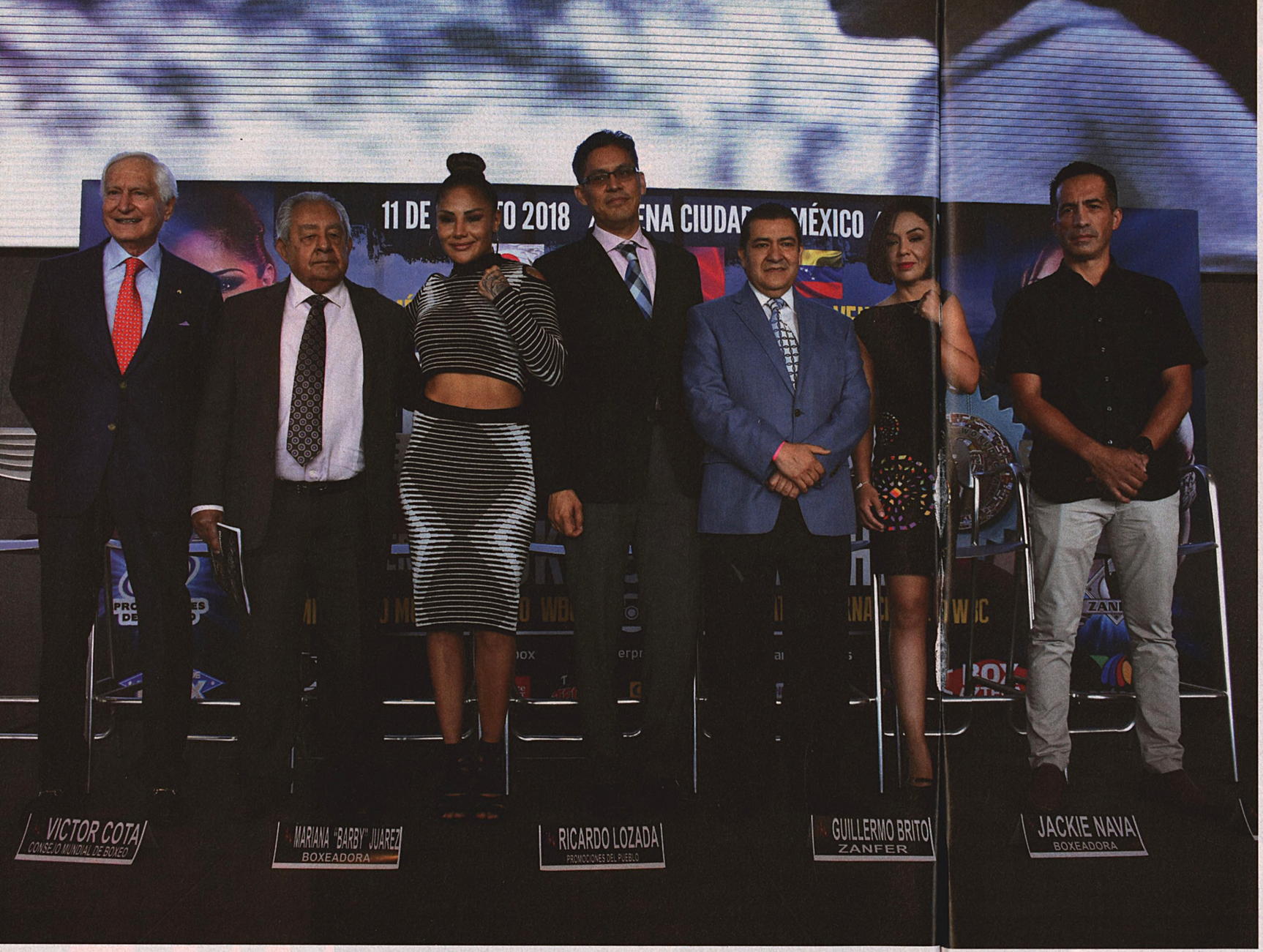


If Mariana Juarez wanted vindication for all the sacrifices she made throughout two decades in the ring, over 30,000 fans cheering her on in Mexico City's Zocalo town square was a good start. But as she prepared to face Zambia's Catherine Phiri on April 1, 2017, redemption was on the mind of "Barby."

"I had everything to lose," said Juarez. "It was either win or say goodbye to boxing."

It had reached that point for the native of Santa Ursula, which lies about 50 miles east of the capital. Since turning pro at 18 in 1998, Juarez had put together a career to be proud of, complete with 44 wins and two divisional world titles. More importantly, after a rough 1-2 start to her career, she became a pioneering force in her country. By the time the Phiri fight rolled around, she was a legitimate superstar, headlining televised card after televised card in front of thousands while opening the door for the elite women who came after her.

But her time had apparently passed. Two fights removed from



CARLOS TISCHLER/GETTY IMAGES

an upset loss to Argentina's Daniela Bermudez, Juarez hadn't fought in a world title fight since 2012, she had undergone two shoulder surgeries over the years and, at 37, she was competing at a time when "retirement" was the word heard more than any other.

The only thing left, it seemed, was the heart that got her to this point in her life. But if that was all that remained, it was plenty to get her through 10 rounds with anyone, including the WBC bantamweight champion, because in a sport where whoever is willing to sacrifice more wins, Juarez had given up more than most.

"I think when it comes to adolescence, we take part in experimenting, going to parties and having boyfriends as part of life," she said of her upbringing in boxing. "I didn't do any of that. And as an adult, sometimes you miss out on spending time with family or your children. But it was worth it."

Juarez married boxing. And on that spring night in her adopted hometown, Juarez turned back the clock, as she won a clear-cut unanimous decision over Phiri to become a world champion once again.

"I showed that there's a lot left to leave in the ring," she said. "I dominated the fight, and I think the fans were pleased with my work and they liked what I did. I was happy, and I believe it was spectacular."

The victory was the first of three in 2017, earning Juarez The Ring's (female) Fighter of the Year award – an improbable outcome as she approached her 38th birthday.

The August 11 card that Juarez shares with Jackie Nava will hopefully set up their showdown, which will be the biggest female boxing bout in Mexican history, later this year.

"It was a great year, especially after working for so long without an opportunity for a world title," said Juarez. "That time was frustrating, but the hard work paid off."

As memorable as 2017 was, Juarez has not taken a victory lap in 2018. She has successfully defended her title twice thus far this year, defeating Gabriela Bouvier and Carolina Arias, and on August 11 she is scheduled to headline in Mexico City against Terumi Nuki on the same card where fellow Mexican star Jackie Nava takes on Alys Sanchez. It is hopefully the prelude to a late 2018 or early 2019 superfight that both fighters want.

"I think it looks promising now," Juarez said of a bout with Nava. "The fight is in the works with our promoters, and this is a fight that not only Mexico wants to see, but all the world as well. I am very excited and the timing is perfect. I want to beat Jackie, and even though it may be a tough fight, I have the ammunition to do it."

A couple years ago, few would have believed her. Maybe Juarez wouldn't have believed it herself as she battled injuries and pivotal losses to Ava Knight, Riyo Togo and Naoko Fujioka.

"It was hard and these fights were tough," Juarez said. "After the shoulder injury, it was a really long process for my recovery. I had to regain my confidence so I wouldn't reinjure myself, and these injuries were very traumatic to my career. There were two major surgeries and it was hard work.

The Bermudez defeat in 2016 truly stung, but she refused to back down.

"After the loss to Bermudez, I watched it a few times, but you can't listen to the criticism. As we say here in Mexico, 'You haven't built anything, but it's easy to knock down what others built.' So I took the bad with the good."

The bad for Juarez was spending two days in the hospital after the Bermudez fight due to hypervitaminosis, which led to severe dehydration. The good was that she was still a fighter, and no elite fighter worth their salt listens to the critics. The only answers come from within, and that goes tenfold for Juarez, who fought harder than most for recognition and respect as she helped create a place for the ladies in the cradle of machismo in Mexico.

"At first they didn't believe in female boxers," she said of her early days in the sport. "We were placed on undercards, and it wasn't until the fans saw that the female boxers had skill, techniques and could fight that we started to get better opportunities. Little by little, we had to show them that we had the skills we needed to be great fighters. And working towards that opened many doors for other fighters who now headline shows."

With those doors opened, Juarez was able to focus on herself without worrying about being the trailblazer. And she's not done yet. The victory over Phiri gave a jolt of new life to a career many thought was over, and Juarez – also a doting mother to 11-year-old daughter Natasha – is looking even beyond a fight with Nava. She talks of returning to the United States, where she lived for several years, for a possible rematch with Knight and even another superfight, one with New York's Amanda Serrano.

"I don't think I've done everything in the sport yet," said Juarez, who hopes to keep reinventing herself like her boxing idol, Muhammad Ali, did. "There's more to do and I want results. I want to do more for the women in Mexico and for the female boxers worldwide."

It's an ambitious plan, to say the least, as Juarez approaches 40. But then again, when she first put on the gloves, the idea of a woman headlining a boxing card in front of 30,000 people would have been laughed at. No one is laughing now.

"I want to show that if you want to do something that many think is an impossible dream, no matter how difficult, you can achieve it. You have to work really hard, and not everything comes easy. You may cry and suffer, but as we say in Mexico, 'Fight, but don't surrender.' Don't give up, work hard, and you will get results."

With one masterful performance, Aleksandr Usyk won the inaugural World Boxing Super Series tournament, unified all four major cruiserweight titles, earned the vacant Ring championship and made himself a frontrunner for Fighter of the Year.

KAZUHIRO NOGI

FIGHT ROUNDUP

BY **BRIAN HARTY**

RECENT ACTION AND FUTURE SIGNIFICANCE

ALEKSANDR USYK UD 12 MURAT GASSIEV

July 21, Olympic Stadium, Moscow

The cruiserweight final of the World Boxing Super Series proved that even if the WBSS isn't the future of boxing (though it might be), it sure as hell *looks* like the future. While fights staged elsewhere continue to have the jungle-gym scaffolds and colored lights of an Iron Maiden concert, the WBSS took a clean, minimalist approach with a single halo of white lights above, VIPs surrounded by a glowing hoop below and seats arranged in concentric circles around the ring. The overhead camera angle was like staring into an arena-sized eye with Moscow's elite in its iris.

Circles were a motif inside the ring also. For all the hunger to see these two undefeated cruiserweights face off in an "even" contest, once the bell rang it was all about the Olympic gold medalist from Ukraine as he orbited Gassiev with a display of punch volume, agility and conditioning unheard of in fighters weighing 200 pounds.

As expected, Gassiev started out patiently stalking for opportunities to use his power while Usyk poured shots on him from the perimeter, but the thinking was that the styles would be forced to meet halfway and the result would be some explosive exchanges. It happened a few times, but nowhere near what the Russian needed to give the vast majority of the 24,000 in attendance what they wanted. He came close in the fourth round when he stunned Usyk with a sledgehammer right,

Josh Taylor took a big step toward world title contention with his hotly contested unanimous decision over former beltholder Viktor Postol.

but it came too late and Usyk showed no signs of damage when the action resumed in the fifth. Overall, the problem for Gassiev was that his style depended on not being forced to cover up like he was near a crashing helicopter and also having his opponent cooperate with being hit by overextending or standing still in the right place at the right time – none of which was going to happen against Usyk, who relentlessly pushed the pace with elusive footwork, disruptive jabs and power punches from all angles.

The CompuBox stats are bewildering: Usyk threw 939 punches overall – exactly three times as many as Gassiev – with 519 jabs. He outlanded Gassiev in every round for jabs and in nine rounds for power punches, with three-quarters of those power shots landing in the second half of the fight. In the 12th alone, he threw a total of 117 punches and multiplied his opponent's connect rate by seven.

After the final bell, a beet-purple Gassiev could only smile, followed by that peculiar moment when a man who's just had his ass kicked embraces his conqueror and congratulates him for his excellence. Even the judges – no insinuations intended – did the only correct thing and delivered scores of 120-108, 119-109 and 119-109 for the newly crowned undisputed cruiserweight champion. Then, after a post-fight interview with the rising pound-for-pound star, who is now giving Gennady Golovkin a challenge for best catchphrase ("I am feel."), there was one last bit of entertainment as Usyk's team tried to figure out how to drape every belt in the world on his body.

JOSH TAYLOR UD 12 VIKTOR POSTOL

June 23, SSE Hydro, Glasgow, Scotland

As two tall, lanky 140-pounders – one southpaw, one orthodox – Josh Taylor and Viktor Postol were like mirror images … in no way whatsoever. Taylor, 27, went into the home-soil fight on an upward trajectory with 12 victories in 12 outings (11 of them knockouts), and was there to snatch the torch from an aging former titleholder. The 34-year-old Postol was there to prove that he was not in decline after losing his belt to Terence Crawford in 2016. Their styles differed accordingly: At his most effective, Taylor bobbed and bombed with youthful aggression; Postol scored when he controlled the pace with meticulous craft and veteran savvy.

Postol, who is somehow both stiff and relaxed, bouncy but grounded with his feet always the same distance apart, either waved his left glove around like an antenna testing the air or whipped it forward with a jab to keep Taylor off-balance. Behind that jab, he targeted the space under Taylor's elbows with the aim of a heron spearing fish

from a pond before bouncing back to jabbing range. Or he followed it all the way into the phone booth and did some sneaky work best seen in replays, though doing so put him perilously in Taylor's comfort zone.

Taylor was great on the inside – rough but also accurate – and was most successful when he didn't wait for Postol to make the first move. In the sixth round, Taylor got a surge of confidence from landing an uppercut and his shift to aggressor painted the roadmap for victory: Whenever he fought like a young man and bullied Postol with switchblade jabs and full-commitment power punches, the Ukrainian technician was in danger and knew it. But Postol also had the chin to absorb some flush shots and return fire, most notably with a right hook that had Taylor holding on at the end of the seventh.

Both won skirmishes, but ultimately the momentum swung in Taylor's favor. Taylor, in fact, had never been past the ninth round but fought better and faster in the championship rounds than in the beginning, while Postol, who had gone the 10- or 12-round distance 12 times already, was getting tagged more and more frequently. A jamming, straight-ish left caught him high on the forehead for a knockdown in the 10th round, and it seemed like welcome insurance for Taylor in what seemed like a close fight. It wasn't needed, though. Taylor deservedly got the decision with a signature performance and will now be looking for an eventual shot at WBC titleholder Jose Ramirez (presumably after participating in the upcoming WBSS 140-pound tournament), but it was clear once the scorecards were read – 118-110, 117-110, 119-108 – that the only chance Postol ever had was to knock Taylor out, revive him with smelling salts and them knock him out again.

JAIME MUNGUIA UD 12 LIAM SMITH

July 21, Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas

For some of us, seeing the "coming-of-age drama" label attached to a movie is an immediate deterrent, right up there with "the story of a lovable talking dog." When it happens in real time over the course of 12 rounds, however, it can be compelling stuff.

In his previous fight, Jaime Munguia supported his 2017 Ring Prospect of the Year award with a four-round blowout of Sadam Ali, who'd scored the year's top upset with his victory over Miguel Cotto. It was funny that Cotto himself was actually sitting ringside at the Hard Rock on July 21, because in some ways he was still shaping the narrative surrounding Munguia, even three rounds into the fight against Liam Smith. Ali had gotten too much credit for beating a burned-

Jaime Munguia couldn't KO a game and gritty Liam Smith as he had so many others, but the 21-year-old got 12 rounds of valuable experience.

out Cotto, so the reasoning went, therefore beating Ali was no big deal and it was only natural that Smith, who'd been waging 12-round battles for years, was exposing Munguia for the 21-year-old coddled contender that he was.

Least impressed of all by the Ali implosion was Smith. He calmly walked through boyishly wide hooks from Munguia to easily deliver punches in more complex, accurate combinations, and grinned as he roughed up his taller opponent on the inside. Munguia's expression, meanwhile, was that of a kid who has lost his phone and suddenly realizes he hasn't memorized a single number.

Starting with a clean left hook in the fourth, however, that expression began to change. He was still missing with some irresponsible punches and Smith was taking advantage with counters, but the young man from Tijuana was gathering himself, pounding his gloves together to fire up and stalking forward with more purpose. Suddenly Smith seemed a bit smaller.

In the sixth, Munguia dialed in a left hook that caught Smith on the temple and floored him, then followed up with an intensified attack on the 29-year-old's midsection (which is where Canelo Alvarez had found the sweet spot to stop the Liverpudlian in 2016). Smith seemed to be showing signs of fatigue, but he surged in a fantastic ninth round with a combination that had Munguia looking back over both shoulders. Munguia wasn't lost anymore, though. He looked completely unconcerned by his foe's power, he had harnessed his youth to work for him, and the bodyshots he put on Smith left no doubt about the identity he wanted for himself. Each rib-bending left hook was like slamming a stamp on his Mexican passport: Approved! Approved! Approved!

After the overly wide decision (116-111, 117-110, 119-108) left Munguia still in possession of his WBO belt and a perfect record (30-0, 25 KOs), Smith was of course asked for his opinion on the winner's chances against Canelo. Smith was complimentary of Munguia's coming-of-age drama that night, but still snuck in a final shot at the kid: "Canelo hits harder."

MANNY PACQUIAO TKO 7 LUCAS MATTHYSSE

July 15, Axiata Arena, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

For the first time since his landmark victory over Lehlo Ledwaba in 2001, Manny Pacquiao walked into a prizefight without Freddie Roach in his corner. Instead it was Buboy Fernandez, Pacquiao's potbellied childhood friend whose original responsibilities included toweling off the fighter's famous calves, standing behind him as head trainer. The circumstances of the divorce were vague but unsettling.

Other things were comfortingly familiar, though, as the energy of the crowd and the still-gracious grin were reminders of Pacman's extraordinary connection with his fans, even when fighting 1,500 miles from the Philippines. It's still a rush when one of his fights is about to begin.

Another thing that hasn't changed in Pacquiao's last several fights is the talk about how committed he is, how

Manny Pacquiao looked great against Lucas Matthysse, but both fighters probably had something to do with that.

Pacquiao clearly relished his role of promoter for the Matthysse event in Malaysia, but also appreciated the outpouring of fan support.

distracted he is by his political career and, most of all, his age. Will Manny get old against Lucas Matthysse? It was a fair question. Pacquiao has always been a guy without a reverse gear, and with 68 fights under his belt the 39-year-old had seen more all-out wars than many fighters see opening bells. Plus he was coming off a loss to Jeff Horn and hadn't scored a knockout since 2009.

But Pacquiao wasn't the one people should've been worried about. And this is where Matthysse's choice of "The Machine" as his alias comes back to haunt him, because it's a scary nickname when knockout victims are sprawled in your tracks, but an invitation to one bad analogy after another when you start to break down. It was a concern when he looked off his game for several rounds before finally knocking out a relatively inept Tewa Kiram in January, and it popped up again against Pacquiao. But Matthysse is in the category of punchers who commentators love to say is "never out of a fight because of his power." It's true, as it was against Kiram, but it starts to sound apologetic when a fighter just looks unsure of himself in the ring. Matthysse tried to set traps, but Pacquiao chopped him with right-handed counters or nailed him with the trademark Pacman move: dipping sideways to his right but dropping a straight left to the nose on his way out the door. He landed all kinds of punches, in fact, because Matthysse repeatedly extended his head forward and offered it like a golf ball on a tee.

It must be said, though: Matthysse was facing a rejuvenated Pacquiao, the kind of fighter for whom the Hall of Fame should bend its rules and just induct him now without a vote and save everyone the ink. Virtually every punch the Argentine threw was dodged and exchanged for an immediate and painful counterpunch – often several – and he could do little to deal with the speed of the all-angled assault landing everywhere between his beltline and the top of his skull. He was put down by a left uppercut sandwiched between two rights in the third round, then took a knee in the last few seconds of the fifth when a deceptive right hook seemed to gently graze his forehead. In the seventh, Pacquiao lined him up with a jab and then sent a left uppercut straight up the tattooed channel to Matthysse's face. Matthysse's head didn't budge, but his rear leg gave out and he collapsed to one knee. When referee Kenny Bayless knelt to begin the count, the 35-year-old resigned by spitting out his mouthguard.

It's hard to say where he goes now, but Matthysse eloquently reiterated the caveat that applies to everyone who has been beaten by Manny Pacquiao:

"What was the hardest part about fighting Manny Pacquiao?" he was asked.

"Fighting Manny Pacquiao," he replied.

As for Senator Consistent (now also his own promoter), you know what he said. We'll go home, talk it over, see what's next … yada, yada. He was born to be a boxing politician. All the big names at welterweight were kicked around as potential opponents as soon as the final bell sounded, some of them with ominous references to youth and pound-for-pound status. And just like nothing had happened, it started all over again: Would Manny be focused? Would he get old?

Brian Harty can be reached at bharty@ringtv.com

WORLD BEAT

Manny Pacquiao isn't what he used to be, but the 39-year-old legend had more than the 35-year-old Lucas Matthysse could handle.

PHILIPPINES

BY RYAN SONGALIA

NO PLANS FOR RETIREMENT: MANNY PACQUIAO PROVED HE'S STILL GOT LIFE AS A PRIZEFIGHTER

Who would have thought that all it'd take for Manny Pacquiao to go from damaged goods to hot topic was for him to start knocking guys out again? That's what the living legend did against Lucas Matthysse in Malaysia, ending a nine-year stoppage drought with three knockdowns in seven rounds. At 39, Pacquiao revived his career and turned apathy into excitement, thanks in no small part to his uppercuts.

"He's back ... he looks good," said Gerry Penalosa, a former champion and close associate of Pacquiao.

Back when Manny was the star of Top Rank's stable, his common refrain was "it's up to my promoter" when asked whom he'd want to fight next. Now that he's promoting his own shows, Pacquiao found a new way to avoid the question, saying in the post-fight interview, "That's another story, another discussion."

Pacquiao said he wants to fight again this year – perhaps even in the U.S. – but didn't offer a wishlist of opponents. Penalosa would like to see his friend finally face Amir Khan after their announced fight in Dubai fell apart last year. On the verge of turning 40, another run at the top fighters in his weight class would seem inadvisable, though fights against Khan, Adrien Broner and even a rematch against Jeff Horn in a place other than Brisbane could be interesting and marketable.

★★★

There's no greater advertising opportunity for a Filipino boxer than the co-main event slot before a Pacquiao fight. Jhack Tepora got that opportunity in Kuala Lumpur, dispatching Edivaldo Ortega in nine rounds to remain unbeaten and pick up one of the WBA's secondary belts. Tepora (22-0, 17 knockouts) looked powerful and tenacious, particularly in the final sequence, but it was clear that the 25-year-old from Cebu City still has much to learn as he steps up in competition.

"It will open so many doors for him, but only if he puts in more work," said Pio Paolo Castillo, Omega Boxing president and Tepora's co-promoter, the day after the fight. "We have learned so much from last night and we see it as an opportunity to improve."

Tepora, who is also signed with MP Promotions, is expected to return in November, says Castillo.

While Pacquiao and Tepora garnered the most attention, a couple other Filipinos also won big in Malaysia. Juan Miguel Elorde, the grandson of the great Flash Elorde, knocked out Ratchanon Sawangsoda in three rounds, while welterweight Jayar Inson scored a unanimous decision over Terry Tzouramanis. Less fortunate were Harmonito Dela Torre, Vincent Astrolabio and JR Magboo, who were stopped by Yongqiang Yang, Yuki Strong Kobayashi and Pacquiao sparring partner George Kambosos Jr., respectively.

★★★

For all the talk of belts during the second week of July, Vic Saludar was the only Filipino fighter to win a recognized world title. The former amateur star from Polomolok made good in his second shot at a belt, dropping Ryuya Yamanaka once in round seven on his way to winning the WBO strawweight title by unanimous decision in Kobe, Japan.

While Saludar would relish a unification showdown with IBF titleholder Hiroto Kyoguchi, a rematch with Yamanaka, possibly in October, is likely next, says trainer Michael Palacios.

The Saludar family had a chance to add another world title, as older brother Froilan Saludar was scheduled to face WBO flyweight titleholder Sho Kimura in China on July 27, just after this issue went to press.

"He told me he will do everything to get the belt," said Palacios, who added that the bigger plan is for Froilan to avenge Vic's 2015 loss to Kosei Tanaka. There's already talk of the Japanese fighter challenging for the belt in September, and should Froilan lift the belt, he'd be in position to stand across from Tanaka.

★★★

Jerwin Ancajas, the IBF junior bantamweight titleholder, was in attendance in Malaysia. It was announced there that Ancajas will get a second crack at impressing fight fans in California when he makes his sixth title defense against an opponent to be named in the Jose Ramirez-Antonio Orozco co-feature at the Save Mart Center in Fresno. His last fight, a points win over Jonas Sultan in the same town, was greeted with boos by the local crowd. Part of it was due to Fresno being a tough crowd, but Ancajas would make a better impression against an aggressive, all-out brawler.

★★★

The Philippines is expected to send a total of eight boxers – six men and two women – to Indonesia for the Asian Games, which run from August 18 to September 2. The team is looking to improve on its 2014 stint, when they didn't earn any gold medals for the first time since 2002. Ed Picson, executive director of ABAP, the country's amateur boxing organization, says the likely representatives will be Carlo Paalam (49 kg), Rogen Ladon (52 kg), Mario Fernandez (56 kg), James Palicte (60 kg), Joel Bacho (69 kg) and Eumir Marcial (75 kg) on the men's side, and Irish Magno (51 kg) and Nesthy Petecio (57 kg) on the women's side.

Globe-trotting IBF 115-pound beltholder Jerwin Ancajas will fight in the U.S. for the third consecutive time on September 14.

JAPAN

BY NICK SKOK

Takuma Inoue (11-0, 3 knockouts) will be fighting Mark John Yap (29-12, 14 KOs) on September 11 at Tokyo's famous Korakuen Hall in what will be a final eliminator to face the WBC bantamweight titleholder. He told Ring Magazine: "My goal is to be world champion."

As of now, the belt is vacant and waiting for a date to be finalized so either Petch Sor Chitpattana or Nordine Oubaali can claim it.

Takuma's older brother Naoya will square off against Juan Carlos Payano in the opening round of the World Boxing Super Series 118-pound tournament. The fight is expected to take place this September. Should both Inoues win their next couple of fights, we could see another set of champion brothers in the sport and the first Japanese siblings to hold titles since the Kamedas.

★★★

Ryuya Yamanaka (16-3, 5 KOs) lost his WBO strawweight title to Filipino challenger Vic Saludar by unanimous decision on July 13 at the Kobe Central Gym. Saludar dropped the now-former champion in the seventh round on his way to the victory.

After the fight, Yamanaka claimed his head was hurt and was hospitalized for the remainder of the three-day weekend, which included a Monday holiday in Japan. No irregularities were found after CT scans. Yamanaka said he plans to continue fighting and won't be deterred by his recent setback, though he admitted he'll probably move up to junior flyweight for his next bout.

★★★

Hiroto Kyoguchi (10-0, 7 KOs) is set to vacate his IBF strawweight title and move up to junior flyweight as well. He has had some difficulties making weight and would welcome

a less stressful training camp that should lead to a fresher performance inside the ring.

His trainer, Takashi Inoue, said, "He is 24 years old and his body is getting bigger. I was scared that he was about to (cramp up) in the (Vince) Paras fight (in May). It was due to dehydration." Kyoguchi himself stated: "There's no reason to stay at strawweight with subpar performances." Watching and learning from footage of Roman Gonzalez and Ricardo Lopez, he compared their weight ascension to his: "If they're the top, I'm only halfway there." Kyoguchi and Yamanaka had hoped to stage a unification fight later this year. With them both moving up in weight, look for their paths to potentially cross.

★★★

Japan has been making international news for its record-setting summer heatwave. The new record of 105.98 degrees (41.1 celsius) was recently marked in Kumagaya, the hometown of flyweight titleholder Sho Kimura. When Kimura was asked about it, he said he wanted to leave his mark on history like his town had. He did so when he became the first Japanese boxer to successfully defend a title in China with a sixth-round knockout of Froilan Saludar. Kimura (17-1-2, 10 KOs) defeated one of China's favorite sons in Shanghai last summer with an impressive TKO of Zou Shiming to claim the title. The bloody affair left an impression on the locals, who took to Kimura and his humble background, which included a part-time job he just quit at the beginning of the year, following his first successful defense.

Embroidered on his shoes for this fight was the word "Zasso," a popular term among athletes that refers to the "weed spirit" – those who don't stand out like a rose in a garden would, but are instead the obscure and relentless weeds that just won't go away.

Kosei Tanaka (11-0, 7 KOs) traveled to China to witness the fight, and the 23-year-old now hopes to face the winner. Tanaka vacated his WBO junior flyweight crown last year and is gunning for his third division title by the end of 2018.

★★★

Ryosuke Iwasa will defend his IBF 122-pound belt on August 16 at Korakuen Hall in Tokyo, the legendary venue where he and countless other Japanese boxing standouts were developed.

Ryosuke Iwasa (25-2, 16 KOs) will defend his IBF junior featherweight title on August 16 against TJ Doheny at Korakuen Hall. The following day, the same venue will see three-division titleholder Akira Yaegashi (26-6, 14 KOs) continue his quest for a fourth when he challenges Hirofumi Mukai at the junior bantamweight limit.

★★★

October 20 is the tentative return date being set aside for Ryota Murata (14-1, 11 KOs), who is likely to fight at an MGM property in Las Vegas. Rob Brant is the mandated opponent, though as of publication, no deal had been finalized despite a WBA-imposed July 15 deadline. Expect to see the fight on either ESPN or the ESPN+ app, as Murata is co-promoted by Top Rank, which has a broadcasting deal with the network.

Nick Skok is The Ring's Japanese Correspondent and can be reached on Twitter @NoSparring.

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

Hot welterweight prospect Thulani "Evolution" Mbenge proved that he was true to his nickname when he took on seasoned former contender Diego Chaves at Emperor's Palace, Gauteng, in a step-up fight on June 23.

In the first round it was clear that Chaves had come to fight, applying his usual pressure with hooks to the head and body while Mbenge sized

NAOKI FUKUDA

him up. In the second, Mbenge's jab started landing with frequency, snapping back the head of Chaves, who still kept trying to make something happen on the inside.

With each round, Mbenge increasingly stamped his authority on the fight, utilizing his reach and height advantage. By the fourth stanza, there was no doubt that he was the stronger, more powerful fighter. Chaves tried to survive by uncharacteristically fighting on the back foot, but it wasn't going to work.

Mbenge's trademark right nailed him in the sixth and a follow-up one-two put him on the canvas. Chaves barely made it out of the round and Mbenge finished it in style in the seventh, opening up Chaves with a straight right to the body, measuring him with the left and then again smashing him to the canvas with the right hand.

Mbenge passed this test with flying colors and moved his record to 14-0 (11 knockouts). The charismatic South African exhibited calm under pressure, more than decent power, a thudding jab and a big straight right to both the head and body. There is still work to be done, but his technique was tighter than usual, and if he keeps progressing he should be able to make the transition from prospect to contender in a stacked welterweight division.

★★★

All eyes were on Moruti

Mthalane, who attempted to regain the crown he never lost in the ring when he faced former amateur star Muhammad Waseem on the Pacquiao-Matthysse undercard for the vacant IBF flyweight title. The 35-2 Mthalane holds wins over the likes of Julio Cesar Miranda, John Riel Casimero and current bantamweight boss Zolani Tete. He is a vastly more experienced pro compared to the 8-0 Waseem, having already held the IBF belt from 2009 to 2014 before vacating, but those victories were years ago and he is 35 years old, which led most people to pick the Korea-based Pakistani to prevail.

Muhammad Waseem closed strongly, but lost his bid to claim the IBF flyweight belt against veteran Moruti Mthalane.

Mthalane started fast, coming in behind his jab and throwing combinations on the inside, sweeping the first five rounds. Waseem was being outworked, but gathered himself and forced his way back into the fight from the sixth round. He had some good moments, throwing combinations of his own to the head and body, finishing with his trademark left hook. Neither fighter wanted to concede; Mthalane would back Waseem up, throw his right hand over his opponent's left and pepper him with combinations, most notably a right uppercut followed by a double left hook, but Waseem would come roaring back with combinations of his own, resulting in some close rounds over the second half.

The 11th round was no exception. Mthalane appeared to be outworking his opponent when Waseem, briefly in a southpaw stance on the inside, clipped Mthalane with a short left to score a knockdown. Mthalane was up quickly and the bell ended the action.

Both fighters had a sense of urgency, which made for a tremendous final round. Waseem came out guns blazing, looking to finish the fight, but Mthalane bit down and came firing back. A right to the ear and several follow-up rights seemed to knock Waseem off balance, and Mthalane looked to be gaining the upper hand when two Waseem left hooks in the dying seconds wobbled him, forcing the South African to hold on as the bell sounded.

There were tense moments, but Mthalane prevailed by two scores of 114-113, which seemed about right, and a rather wide 116-110. Four and a half years after his first reign ended, he is once again the IBF flyweight champion of the world, and a strong candidate for the 2018 Comeback of the Year award. RING

Droeks Malan is a correspondent based in Stellenbosch, Western Cape, South Africa. You can read his blogs at couchpotatofightguru.blogspot. com and follow him on Twitter @droeksonboxing.

AT THE FIGHTS

BY LAMAR CLARK

STYLES MAKE FIGHTS

DAZN AMERICAN LAUNCH: 1. Matchroom CEO Eddie Hearn, Executive Chairman of Perform Group John Skipper and heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua 2. Katie Taylor 3. MMA fighter Michael Page 4. Demetrius Andrade and DAZN CEO James Rushton 5. Michael Buffer and Nikita Ababiy 6. Alexander Povetkin and Jarrell Miller

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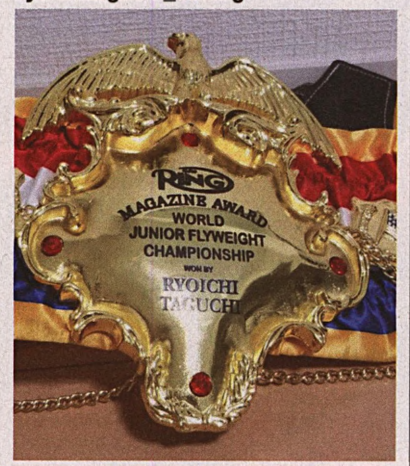

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BAD BLOOD

When Oscar De La Hoya and Fernando Vargas fought on September 14, 2002, their anticipated clash for the vacant Ring junior middleweight title was the culmination of a rivalry years in the making (since before Vargas' pro debut), and the heated grudge match lived up to the hype. Vargas, the bull to De La Hoya's matador, had early success, but The Golden Boy worked his way into the hard fight, rocked his fellow Mexican-American star at the end of Round 10 and finished the job in dramatic fashion in the 11th.

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COMING UP

Anthony Joshua poses with his heavyweight titles and the man he will attempt to defend them against, Alexander Povetkin, on September 22 in London.

AUGUST

AUG. 18 – Carl Frampton vs. Luke Jackson, featherweights, Belfast, Northern Ireland (BT Sport). Also fighting: Tyson Fury vs. Francesco Pianeta, heavyweights; Cristofer Rosales vs. Paddy Barnes, flyweights.
AUG. 18 – Sullivan Barrera vs. Sean Monaghan, light heavyweights, Bethlehem, Penn. (Facebook).
AUG. 25 – Raymundo Beltran vs. Jose Pedraza, lightweights (for Beltran's WBO title), Phoenix, Ariz. (ESPN, ESPN3.com). Also fighting: Isaac Dogboe vs. Hidenori Otake, junior featherweights (for Dogboe's WBO title).

SEPTEMBER

SEPT. 8 – Danny Garcia vs. Shawn Porter, welterweights (for vacant WBC title), Brooklyn, New York (Showtime).
SEPT. 8 – Amir Khan vs. Samuel Vargas, junior middleweights, Birmingham, England.
SEPT. 14 – Jose Ramirez vs. Antonio Orozco, junior welterweights (for Ramirez's WBC title), Fresno, Calif. (ESPN, ESPN+)
SEPT. 15 – Gennady Golovkin vs. Canelo Alvarez, middleweights (for Golovkin's WBA and WBC titles), Las Vegas (HBO Pay-Per-View).
SEPT. 22 – Anthony Joshua vs. Alexander Povetkin, heavyweights (for Joshua's IBF, WBA and WBO titles), London (Sky Box Office, DAZN in U.S.).
SEPT. 28 – George Groves vs. Callum Smith, super middleweights (for Groves' WBA title; World Boxing Super Series final), Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

OCTOBER

OCT. 6 – Artur Beterbiev vs. Callum Johnson, light heavyweights (for Beterbiev's IBF title), Chicago (DAZN). Also fighting: Jessie Vargas vs. TBA, welterweights; Katie Taylor vs. Cindy Serrano, lightweights.
OCT. 20 – Billy Joe Saunders vs. Demetrius Andrade, middleweights (for Saunders' WBO title), Los Angeles (DAZN).

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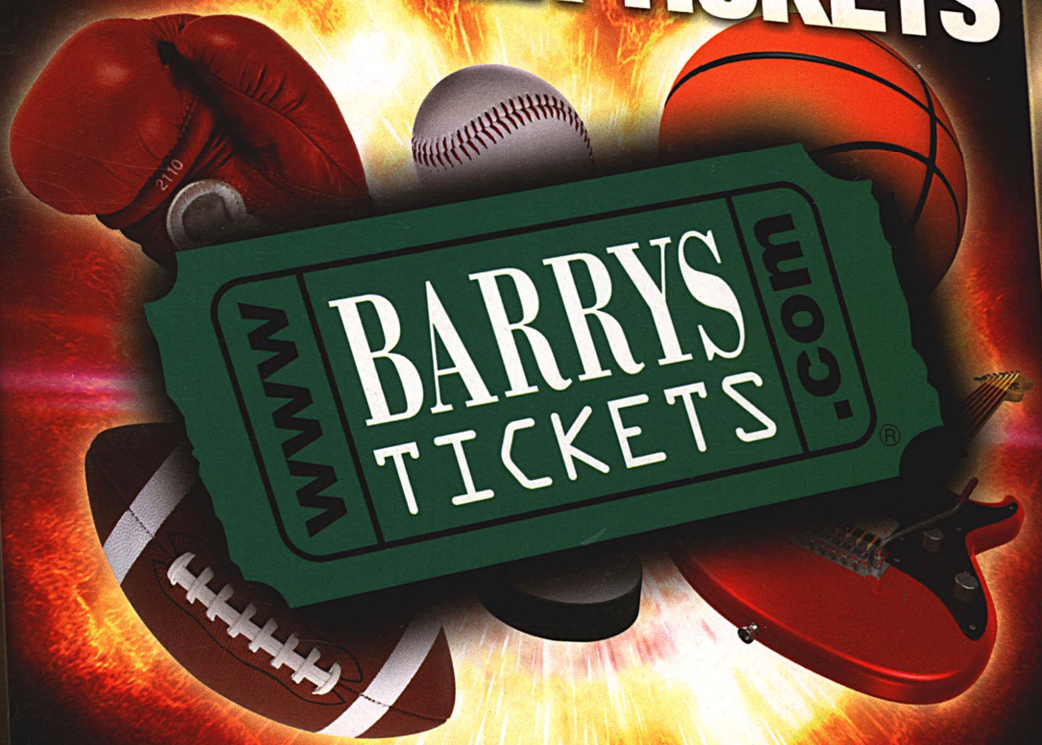

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